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# STAR WARS

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# THE RETROBATES

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE STAR WARS GAME?



## DARRAN JONES

Although I'm a big fan of *Rogue Leader*, the original *Star Wars* coin-op will always remain my favourite from the franchise.

**Expertise:**
Juggling a gorgeous wife, two beautiful girls and an award-winning magazine.
**Currently playing:**
*Guitar Hero Live*
**Favourite game of all time:**
*Strider*



## NICK THORPE

I've always had a soft spot for *Star Wars Racer Arcade*, mostly because of its unconventional driving controls. Try it if you come across it!

**Expertise:**
Owning six Master Systems (I sold one)
**Currently playing:**
*WWE 2K16*
**Favourite game of all time:**
*Sonic The Hedgehog*



## PAUL DRURY

I vividly remember gripping the controller of the original coin-op for the very first time at Alfreton Leisure Centre, aged 14. A magical moment.

**Expertise:**
Saving womp rats
**Currently playing:**
*Guitar Hero Live*
**Favourite game of all time:**
*Sheep In Space*



## GRAEME MASON

The original *Star Wars: Battlefront*. I spent hours just battling it out on some of the iconic locations such as Hoth and Mos Eisley.

**Expertise:**
Adjusting the tape azimuth with a screwdriver
**Currently playing:**
*Shadow Warrior (2014)*
**Favourite game of all time:**
*Resident Evil 4*



## DAVID CROOKES

This will shock you but I only saw the films when I was 21 years old and I've never played a *Star Wars* game…

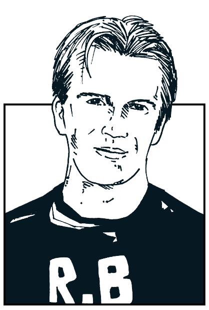
**Expertise:**
Amstrad, Lynx, adventures, Dizzy, and PlayStation (but is it retro? Debate!)
**Currently playing:**
*Broken Sword 5: The Serpent's Curse*
**Favourite game of all time:**
*Broken Sword*



## JASON KELK

I was never much good at it, but liked *Super Star Wars* on the SNES – the music alone was fabulous.

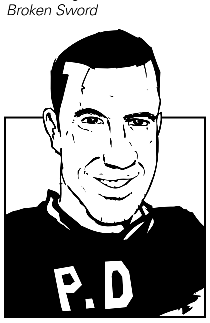
**Expertise:**
Being a homebrew hero
**Currently playing:**
*Danger Zone (C64)*
**Favourite game of all time:**
*Io*



## RICHARD BURTON

I have a soft spot for *Star Wars: Shadows Of The Empire* on Nintendo 64 purely for the superb Battle Of Hoth level.

**Expertise:**
Time travel
**Currently playing:**
*Dun Darach*
**Favourite game of all time:**
*Manic Miner*



## PAUL DAVIES

The one I remember most fondly is the original arcade one with the trench run. I must've played it maybe two or three times, but it seemed like the ultimate game.

**Expertise:**
Repeatedly banging my head against a brick wall
**Currently playing:**
*Destiny: The Taken King*
**Favourite game of all time:**
*Ghouls 'N Ghosts*

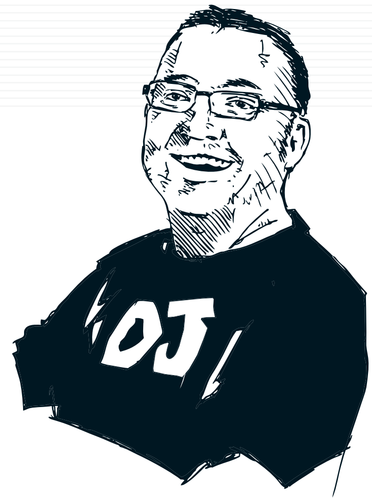


## JON WELLS

The choices! If I have to pick one I will have to go with *KOTOR*! I put so many hours into that game, and, as I'm a sucker for *Lego* games, *Lego Star Wars* is a close second.

**Expertise:**
Tackling dirty nappies and retro spreads
**Currently playing:**
*COD: Black Ops III*
**Favourite game of all time:**
*Super Mario World*

# LOADING...



23 years ago when my wife and I started dating we went for a weekend trip to Wales. Whilst we were there we visited Porthcawl, a resort on the south coast that I religiously visited each year with my grandparents. Growing up, the seafront was host to some of the best arcades and every single one had a sit-down cabinet of *Star Wars*, it was that popular a game.

While my future wife to be knew that I was weird and liked things like videogames, *D&D* and *Star Wars* before we started dating, it wasn't until I marched her through each arcade on that seafront that she realised just how deep my obsession ran.

It took a good couple of hours of diligent searching (translated: I was playing other games and didn't want to move on) but we eventually found *Star Wars* in the last arcade we visited. While Mel wasn't too happy about it I was in heaven and it transported me back to the time when I first discovered the game as an impressionable nine-year-old.

We've not only dedicated our main feature to this classic game, but we're also celebrating all things *Star Wars* by looking at your favourite games too. While the number one spot shouldn't be much of a surprise there are a few curve balls in there.

Enjoy the magazine!



# CONTENTS

**>> Load 149** Breathing new life into classic games



## The Making Of Saboteur

Rory Milne looks back at this action-adventure classic

36

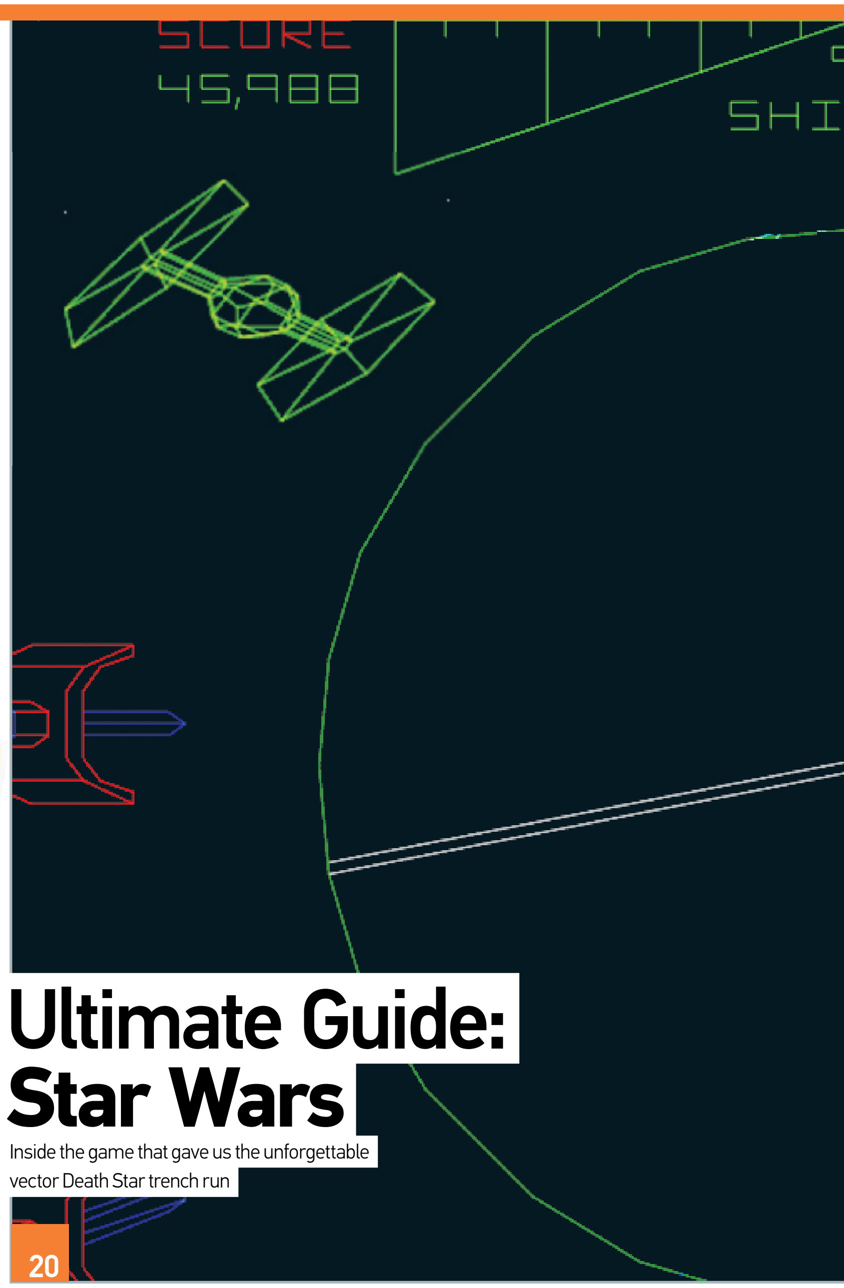




## The Making Of: Walker

70






## Ultimate Guide: Star Wars

Inside the game that gave us the unforgettable vector Death Star trench run

20




## Philips Videopac G7000

David Crookes revisits the follow-up to the Magnavox Odyssey

62

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» The LAN gaming section proved very popular

# PLAY EXPO: READER'S VERDICT

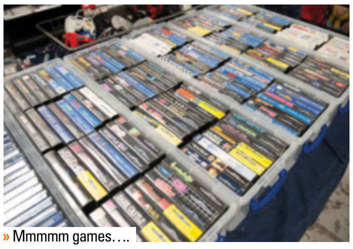
## Readers look back at this year's big retro gaming event

## CONTENTS



**Early-October saw Manchester's Event City venue taken over once more by a mass of retro and** gaming love. The PLAY Expo has quickly become a cornerstone of retro gaming events in the UK, and it continues to offer a varied and entertaining one or two days to anyone that is remotely interested in videogaming, both modern and retro – as well as cosplay.

Many readers visit the show and we were interested to discover why so many head there. Reader Matthew Wilson, like many others, enjoys the community aspect of it. "Even though I own lots of retro systems," he tells us. "I never get much chance to play them



» Mmmmm games….

with other people, not many mates locally who are in to the scene. It's an opportunity to meet like minded people and also play games I'd never otherwise get to play." Reader Andy Roan agrees, "The social element is great because people I know from various forums, Facebook groups, and so on, all come down and it's a great chance to catch up with them. Plus there are so many systems I could never own, arcade cabinets and pinball machines I could never afford or fit in the house, retro events like these give me a great opportunity to enjoy my hobby around like-minded people".

While there are plenty of sections devoted to board games, and modern games it's the large retro section that has always been a major pull for readers. There remains a vast assortment of retro consoles and computers, including over one hundred arcade machines and an equal number of pinball machines, both old and new. As usual, the Replay Events crew had designed a number of themed areas for the consoles, including rows dedicated to wrestling titles





» Queues were well-managed this year

throughout history, as well as a timely look back at *Star Wars* and *James Bond*-themed videogames. "I thought [the retro section] was good," continues Matthew. "A lot of people complained that it was moved to the back of the hall, but quite I liked it all being in one place and I think there was more there than previous years. Could have done with more Amstrad stuff but you can't have everything."

Not everyone was satisfied however, with Liam Donaghy having his own opinions. "It was the first year that I felt the re-play area of the event took a backseat in favour of other areas. The retro area felt very small compared to previous years, and it seems to be pushed further and further towards the rear of the venue each year. The only real positive remark I can give the retro section this year was that it was spread

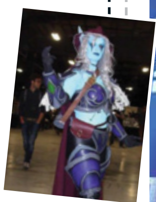


» *Q*Bert* creator Warren Davis chatted to Paul Drury.

## THREE EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

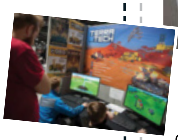
### COSPLAY

■ PLAY Expo has always had a strong cosplay element, but this year's events, talks and shows were a standout, as was the crowd of suitably attired attendees. Of note were an immaculately made-up Joker played by Kieren McGinn and an awesome blue-skinned Sylvanas Windrunner from *World Of Warcraft*, played by Zara Jane Fox.



### INDIES

■ There was a wealth of indie talent on show at this year's PLAY Expo. The return of Mike Heald with his beautiful (and bloody) Wulverblade, and the slightly-less-violent but just as entertaining multiplayer game Chompy Chomp Chomp Party were backed up by several impressive new games such as Abyssal Arts' City Of The Shroud and Payload Studios' Terra Tech.



### DIGITIZER

■ This was an unexpected delight on Saturday lunchtime. Paul 'Mr. Biffo' Rose took to the stage alongside **Retro Gamer** regular Paul Drury, and proceeded to delight and amuse the crowd in a spontaneous chat detailing in particular his time at the helm of Teletext gaming magazine, Digitizer.




» A cosplayer shows off her Juliet Starling costume.



» Tom Charnock was in attendance with his Dreamcast Junkyard.


» The large amount of pinball tables proved as popular as ever.


» One of the many sellers of geek culture stalls.

out much more openly this year, allowing for much better movement of people between the tables and stalls."

One thing everyone did agree on that getting into the event was a lot easier than previous years. "It was literally a case of people power," explains event manager Andy Brown. "We had eight hand scanners provided by our ticketing agent and 16 people staffing the queues and handing out wristbands. When the doors opened at 10am, everybody in the queue already had a wristband on and walked straight in!"

Since 2013, PLAY Expo has expanded its scope to include other branches of entertainment such as film and TV. Building on the established elements of the show (retro and modern gaming, cosplay), there were once more special guests in attendance, the highlight being the sixth Doctor, Colin Baker, on the Sunday. Yet while the other famous names were a little underwhelming compared to 2014, the guest talks excelled. "I like that celebs have been brought in", admitted Andy Roan. "The talks are always great and I have learned so much about the games industry, some of them I didn't get to see at the time so I look out for them on Youtube as well." Liam was also impressed by the talks. "I'm usually not one for talks and celebrity meetings, but this year was my first experience in both areas. I was impressed by the wide variety of talks, and the Star Wars celebrity panel was an amazing treat for attendees this year."

As usual with PLAY Expo, even browsing the numerous stalls was fun, and the range of goods for sale was as notable as ever. Readers felt prices were mostly reasonable, although the food was predictably expensive. "The ones selling games stuff were for the most part good," Mataththew tells us. "The 'other' stalls seemed a bit pricy. £25 for a T-shirt?" Liam also felt there were some good bargains to be had.

"The games that I were interested in however, did seem reasonably priced for the conditions they were in. I always trust Console Passion with their pricing model. I have picked up many games from their stalls over the years because of their pricing, and this years pricing was no exception."

This year's Play Expo proved popular, with over 19,000 people attending and next year's has already been announced and will take place on the 8 and 9 October 2016. Next up for Replay Events is a new venture that aims to take advantage of the surging demand for retro videogaming collecting: The London Video Gaming Market. By the time you read this, this event will have already taken place on Sunday the 15th November, but there will be further quarterly markets at the Royal National Hotel in Russell Square, London. Head over to londongamingmarket.com if you are interested.

In terms of expos, next up for Replay is a show north of the border in Glasgow. Head over to playexpoglasgow.com to learn more. *

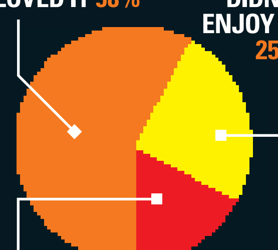
## WHAT DID YOU THINK OF PLAY EXPO?

■ Epic show, tons of people to meet, lots to play on and see. Well worth it.
**PSJ3809**

■ The use of space was weird. The arcade machines were definitely getting hogged a bit. Too many pinball machines. No interest in board games and/or cosplay, so that's all wasted on me.
**BLUCE_REE**

■ Full admiration and respect for the effort that went into putting it on, my small event five years ago was knackering! There are obviously still smaller events but there was a time when you would meet 30-40 **RG** members in a rugby club or whatever and boy, was that fun!
**SSCOTT**

■ Looking back my main issue was how how crammed the stall/market section was, it was like a cattle market unlike the previous years where you actually had breathing room between stalls.
**ARCHAICKOALA**



## DRAGON'S LAIR GOES BIG SCREEN

Don Bluth has gone to Kickstarter to seek funding for a movie based on *Dragon's Lair*. The hit Eighties arcade game was renowned for allowing players to interact with a high quality cartoon played from a LaserDisc. The crowdfunding drive seeks $550,000 to create a pitch, which will be used to introduce Dirk The Daring and his damsel in distress Princess Daphne to movie studios and other investors, in an attempt to gain the millions of dollars of funding that are required to produce and market a full movie. The campaign was still in progress as we went to press.



## RELIVE THE GREAT CONSOLE WAR

One of our popular bookazines is back, as the **Mega Drive Book/Super NES Book** is available in a revised edition, allowing you to relive the struggle between these titans. No matter which side you were on there's plenty to reminisce over – both systems are covered with a host of features. Plus, you can enjoy features on hits such as *Sonic*, *Super Metroid*, *Streets Of Rage* and *Super Mario Kart*. Get the book now from all good newsagents, or order it online at imagineshop.co.uk.






» [iOS] Flamethrowers, rockets and more mean that this should be an aggressive *Micro Machines* outing.

# DINNER TABLE DRAGSTERS

### MICRO MACHINES IS MAKING A COMEBACK

If you've got fond memories of plugging extra controllers into a J-Cart and playing with toy cars long into the night, you'll doubtless be thrilled to know that *Micro Machines* is making a return after spending nine years out of action. The new game, simply titled *Micro Machines*, is a mobile game for iOS and iPad. It's being developed in collaboration between Codemasters and the mobile publisher Chillingo, a subsidiary of Electronic Arts.

The new game returns to classic environments such as the kitchen, the pool table and the classroom, and uses the dynamic 3D camera introduced in *Micro Machines* V3. By the look of what we've seen so far, it also takes a rather more combat-oriented approach to the racing template established in the hit Nineties series, with trailers showing magnet attacks, mounted guns and more. You'll be able to take on other players online, as expected in this age of universal connectivity. There will also be a large collection of vehicles to acquire for the digital hoarders amongst us.

*Micro Machines* is due to be released before the end of the year via the App Store – look out for a review in **Retro Gamer** in the near future.

» [iOS] There's a sink, so we can hope that the sport of sponge sumo returns.



> "You'll be able to take on other players online, as expected in this age of universal connectivity"

# DINO DINI REVIVES KICK OFF

### NEW ENTRY IN THE SERIES IS COMING TO PLAYSTATION PLATFORMS




» [Amiga] Could this new game finally be the one to drag the faithful away from *Kick Off 2*?

The legendary *Kick Off* series is set to return, as announced by Dino Dini – the original developer, who hasn't been involved with the series for 25 years. The new game, titled *Dino Dini's Kick Off Revival*, is set to stick to series traditions while offering an updated experience. "The important things will not change," according to the initial announcement. "The ball is not stuck to your feet; you can shoot the way you want; aiming and swerving the ball will be 100 per cent under your control." Though the default camera view will still be the classic top-down perspective, the game will feature 3D visuals. Additionally, the game is set to offer 360° passing and shooting thanks to its support for analogue controls.

*Dino Dini's Kick Off Revival* has been announced for a 2016 release on PlayStation 4 and PlayStation Vita. We'll bring you more details and screenshots as they become available.




**Here's my bio… Paul Davies**
In 1992 I started out on *Mean Machines Sega* and *Nintendo Magazine System*. In 1995 I became editor of *C&VG*. I led the *C&VG* website from 1998 until Christmas 2000, then I left journalism to be concept design manager at Criterion Games. I returned to journalism in 2002 and from 2005 I've been running my own company, Unlikely Hero.

# ADDICTION/AFFECTION TOMATO/TOMATO

**Falling in love with a game seems like a ridiculous idea, but only if you've never had the pleasure. There are the 'best games of all time', but this is different.**

Asking somebody, "What's your favourite videogame?" is like asking about flavours of crisps. The answers you get may change on a whim, or in time, because of so many tastes to choose from. But when it comes to affairs of the heart, it's just wrong not to be completely honest – even at the risk of embarrassment, like owning up to your first love.

I realise that I even have a type. Because of *Galaxian* and *R-Type*, I absolutely adore clever creature design. After *Donkey Kong* and *Super Mario Bros.* I've grown to appreciate pattern-learned obstacle courses dearly. Owing to all of these games' pixel-precise control, I cannot suffer 'woolly' or basically poor response. As a kid that started buying music in the Eighties, I get a kick out of synth pop but I prefer rock and have gone deep with classical. Give me a solid combination of all these things, and I'll return to it over and over again; obsessively.

The love of my life is Capcom's *Ghouls 'N Ghosts*. One look at the Shielder boss (an armour-clad ogre that removes its fire-breathing head) and I was besotted. There is a perfect degree of control over Knight Arthur. Every inch of progress is met by richer visual rewards, the rich fantasy visuals matched by a rousing musical score. My time with this game could never be casual. I had to know everything about it. The more I pushed it (usually until 4am) the more I saw of its meticulous inner workings. Admiration shifted to adoration and back again, over and over again in an infinite, intoxicated loop.

Some might call this addiction. It's certainly an affliction. But I prefer to call it love discovered from deep understanding. Scratch that: I know that it's love; an uncommon connection.

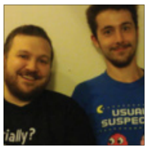
Intrigued by what others have fallen for, I reached out to friends and colleagues. On the **Retro Gamer** team, Drew 'fessed up to knowing *Metroid Fusion* and *Zero Mission* quite well, saying: "I practically know Zebes and the BSL station like the back of my hands. I know Ridley's attack pattern down to the individual pixel movement – you had to on hard mode – and I managed to make sense of the SA-X's erratic behaviour." Nick can beat *Sonic the Hedgehog*'s Green Hill Zone Act 1 in 38 seconds… blindfolded. Darran gave me one word: *Strider*. And I got it.

Guys in my *Destiny* group rinsed *Mega-Man X*, had their perception of games changed entirely by *Rez* and couldn't escape the cockpit of *TIE Fighter* ("Still have shield management keyboard flashbacks every now and then"). I did cry a little bit too when one of them said, "The moment I first made it to Lake Hylia, taking in the sheer scale of it all, has stayed with me to this day as one of most vivid memories of my life."

Don't tell me this isn't love. *



**What do you think?**
**Do you agree with Paul's thoughts? Contact us at:**
RetroGamerUK @RetroGamer_Mag retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk www.retrogamer.net/forum



# Monster Finger Games

James Ross and Stuart Wright talk about their retro-inspired games

**How did Monster Finger Games get started?**
We started the team (ourselves and Linsey Laland) through a mutual love of retro games and modified cars. We got together and produced a basic version of our first game, *Super Renegade Response*, over a period of a year and originally released it onto the Ouya console.

**Your first couple of games, *Super Renegade Response* and *Rush Hour Mayhem*, include inspiration from *Spy Hunter*. What is it that appeals to you about the game?**
Stuart: *Spy Hunter* and other games from that era had instant user connectivity and allowed pretty much anyone just to pick up and play it, and that is one of the many reasons why I think myself and others found them so enjoyable and partly the reason why some of the elements were introduced into our games. Personally I also liked the idea of a basic narrative produced mainly by the player's imagination.

James: Personally I have always been a big fan of retro top-down games from *Spy Hunter* to *Super SWIV* and even *Speedster* on the PSone. You don't tend to see those types of games anymore so I wanted to put our spin on the classics, but with a real emphasis on the driving mechanics which is why there is a more advanced control option on *Super Renegade Response*. With *Rush Hour Mayhem* we wanted to use the retro top-down look so it was reminiscent of *Spy Hunter*, but with a completely different gameplay aesthetic, we wanted to really rewrite the rule book of endless driving games.



» [Ouya] *Rush Hour Mayhem* is also available for Android phones via the Google Play store.

**Not many people look to standalone electronic games for inspiration, but you've gone for that with *Uggs Eggs*, which draws from *Grandstand's Caveman*. How did that game come about?**
James: I was sat on my sofa thinking of going on my *Caveman* game, then I thought I could just make it myself. As I was creating it from memory it made our game a little different and then it grew from there with physics and other new features being added.

Stuart: James suggested the idea and it grew from there, the basic concept of the game is very simple, enabling it to be an instantly accessible title, just like the game and watch titles of yesteryear, but with our own personal twists including Ugg's diner of which the menu is vast, including eggs, eggs and an extra side of eggs.

**The Ouya has had a bit of a rough ride since its debut. What is it that attracts you to the platform?**
Stuart: The Ouya console was a great change to the next gen console hype, even though it got quite a negative press. Allowing people to upload their own games to play on the big screen without dev kits and licensing fees was a real breath of fresh air. The price of just under £100 rather than £200 to £300 and games not being upwards of £30 made it attractive.

James: When I saw the first article about the Ouya and just how accessible it was going to be I was hooked. Closer to the launch I found out Clickteam had created an Ouya object to make bringing games to the console a breeze, so we just had to do it. I wanted to believe that the Ouya could bring back the era of the bedroom coder, it fell short of that but it's an excellent console.



» [Ouya] As they're built in Clickteam Fusion, Monster Finger Games' releases are also available on PC



» [Arcade] With simple gameplay, arcade classics like *Spy Hunter* provide good bases for mobile games.

**What are the advantages of using Clickteam software to build your games?**
James: From my stand point I started learning programming in Blitz Basic and I really didn't enjoy it, so I then moved onto Klik and Play and have stuck with Clickteam programs right through to Clickteam Fusion 2.5. Even though they have their own limitations I found and still do find them to be far more enjoyable then using a coding language. I would recommend it to anyone wanting to make 2D games as the visual editor and all the support available makes it a great program.

**What's next after *Uggs Eggs*?**
Stuart: After *Uggs Eggs* we have a couple of projects in the pipeline, but the one that shows promise in my eyes is a platformer, *Bruce Force*.

James: For the team the next big thing is that Stu will be getting into the visual scripting so we can be more productive, regarding our next titles though as Stu said the next big one will be *Bruce Force* and soon after that *Tabo Kaminari*. *



» Tabletop electronic games aren't a common source of inspiration, but *Uggs Eggs* draws from *Caveman*.



» [Ouya] *Uggs Eggs* was known as *Caveman Grudge Match* in development.


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# the vault

THE COOL RETRO STUFF THAT WE'VE HAD OUR EYE ON THIS MONTH

PICK OF THE MONTH

## Atari Flashback 6



Retro plug and play machines simply don't get more retro than the Atari Flashback line, and this latest model features 100 built-in games to sink your teeth into. These include the likes of arcade hits such as *Centipede*, *Asteroids*, *Missile Command*, and *Space Invaders* (though curiously, the latter isn't the original Atari 2600 conversion), as well as original hits like *Yars' Revenge* and *Adventure*. There are also some rediscovered prototypes like *Combat Two* and *Save Mary*, which means that the device offers something to those who own the original hardware.

The machine is a small device styled after the original woodgrain model of the Atari 2600, which plugs straight into the TV via composite and offers two wireless infra-red joysticks. You can't expand the game count in any way as there's no slot for removable media, though you can use the included controller ports to connect original Atari 2600 joysticks, as well as paddles for games like *Warlords*.

**Price:** £49.99 **From:** funstockretro.co.uk

## Street Fighter Christmas Jumper



If you're likely to be dragged away from your consoles to spend some time with the in-laws this Christmas, you needn't pine for some *Street Fighter* goodness. Simply pick up a festive jumper and you can imagine chucking Sonic Booms to your heart's content – but if you're not a Guile player, other designs feature Ryu, Ken, Chun Li and Sagat.

**Price:** £34.99

**From:** amazon.co.uk

## NES Cartridge Hip Flasks

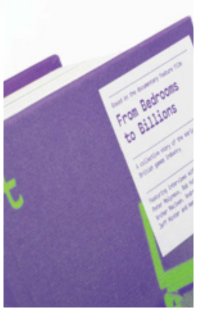
If you've got big pockets and need to keep your hip flask incognito, why not try these vessels fashioned after NES cartridges? Just don't let anyone stare at those parody labels too long – even those not well-versed in 8-bit Nintendo gaming might suspect something's up with game titles like *Castlevodka* and *Super Bar-Hop Bros…*

**Price:** $20

**From:** inkwhiskey.com




## Britsoft: An Oral History



The latest book from Read-Only Memory is a companion piece to the documentary film *From Bedroom To Billions*, and features interviews with many of the pioneers that helped to build the UK gaming industry during the formative years of 8-bit computing. Interviewees include David Braben, Archer Maclean, Jeff Minter, Geoff Crammond and more. Additionally, the book features some archive imagery including photographs and magazine adverts.

**Price:** £30

**From:** readonlymemory.vg

## Mega Drive Wireless Console: Mortal Kombat Edition



AtGames' *Mortal Kombat* edition of the Mega Drive Wireless Console packs in 80 games, of which 40 are real Mega Drive classics including the likes of *Sonic 2*, *Streets Of Rage 2*, *Shinobi III*, *Golden Axe*, *Columns* and, of course, the first three *Mortal Kombat* games. It includes infra-red wireless control pads, but if you don't feel like constantly changing batteries it also supports original Mega Drive accessories. Better yet, you're not limited to the machine's built-in software as there's a cartridge slot available as well.

**Price:** £49.99 **From:** funstockretro.co.uk

DISCUSS

# How much does condition matter to you?

## Forum
www.retrogamer.net/forum

■ I'm not a rabid collector so I don't fuss too much over the condition. I won't buy anything tatty but I won't pay a premium for mint quality either. Somewhere in between – good quality for sensible money. That's how I do it.
**Sokurah**

■ For my Mega Drive collection I'm fussy, but not too bothered for other systems. As long as they don't have poo on the disc – I had this once at a car boot!
**Timothy Redux**

■ If I'm going to keep it then it has to be complete and in excellent condition. Why? Not really sure in all honesty! I guess I just can't see a beat-up or shabby box looking very appealing on the shelf. I'm okay with loose carts if I just want to play them however.
**Megamixer**

■ It doesn't have to be pristine, but I'll tend to only buy used games if in good condition or better. Only caveat, if it's something extremely rare.
**Mayhem**

## Twitter
Twitter.com/@RetroGamer_mag

■ It's always cost vs condition and cartridges vs discs. Cartridges can be dinged up long as they play fine, discs need to be CIB.
**@sacaitlin**

■ As long as the game plays I'm not at all bothered about the box. I bin most boxes anyway.
**@miggybaz**

■ The only thing that bothers me is when "Josh" decided to write his name on the cart. Yes Josh, I know the game was yours.
**@Robot_Ninjutsu**

■ It's just gotta work, though I have a few C64 that don't load, and are purely because I just wanted them.
**@ThigyDaze**

■ Look for a 8/10+ – no tears to card, paper parts but accept some wear to plastic.
**@zx_spectrum_30**

■ With Nintendo I am happy with cartridge only, so long as the label is there [on the cart], but with anything else I go for complete in box.
**@TWWhittaker**

## Facebook
facebook.com/RetroGamerUK

■ If I come across games at garage or car boot sales, usually I'll grab each and every cartridge I don't already have, but most of the time these are loose or in the slip cases, so you have to learn to make peace with that.
**Michael PH**

■ It's nice to have a brand-new box for the games you like the most, but they get so expensive sometimes that it can be ridiculous.
**Alex Wright**

■ If I look at something I want and it's battered and bent you have to think, 'How easy it is to get one in better condition?' If I've never seen one before then I'll get it.
**Mark R Jones**

■ I would prefer a booklet and box but if it's a bargain and the label is ripped and someone has spilt malt vinegar over it, so be it!
**Britt Roberts**

■ Boxed with instructions only. I would prefer a pristine one but for rarities as long as everything's there and it's not falling apart I'd buy that one.
**Mark Hogg**



## What We Think

■ It's obviously nice to have games in great condition, but the realities of retro game collecting are pretty harsh. I certainly wouldn't be without my disc-only copy of *Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night* – the case, manual and soundtrack disc would be nice, but the nicest thing of all is playing it.

# BACK TO THE NINETIES

# THE LATEST NEWS FROM DECEMBER 1998

**DECEMBER 1998 – Mario throws a party, Rogue Squadron takes on the Empire, Sonic gets adventurous, Asteroids are back, Falcon 4.0 flies in while Fighting Layer and House Of The Dead 2 arrive in arcades. Richard Burton is feeling festive…**






[Arcade] *The House Of The Dead 2* was more of the same familiar zombie dispatching goodness.

Rumours were rife that Sony's PlayStation 2 console was nearer to being released than anyone first thought. Sources suggested that it would appear in Japan by April 1999 and in Europe by Christmas 1999 and that it would also be backwards compatible with the original PlayStation. Sony quashed the hearsay by stating, "PlayStation 2 is nothing more than a project." The actual release dates were March 2000 for Japan and November 2000 for Europe.

What is Christmas without a party? A gathering of friends and relatives playing board games, getting tetchy, throwing tantrums (and the board game) then stomping off for another pint of port down the pub – it's the annual games based festive stropathon. Well now you can experience these joys and the associated punch-ups with *Mario Party* newly released on the Nintendo 64.

As a party game, it features 56 (plus three hidden) mini-games played out in conventional board game style with a virtual dice dictating your moves. Games can be split into a variety of player combinations be it co-operative, free-for-all or three-on-one.

While the games are very short in length and simple to play, it was the communal excitement brought about with friends and family getting overly enthusiastic and shouty that really made *Mario Party* a winner.

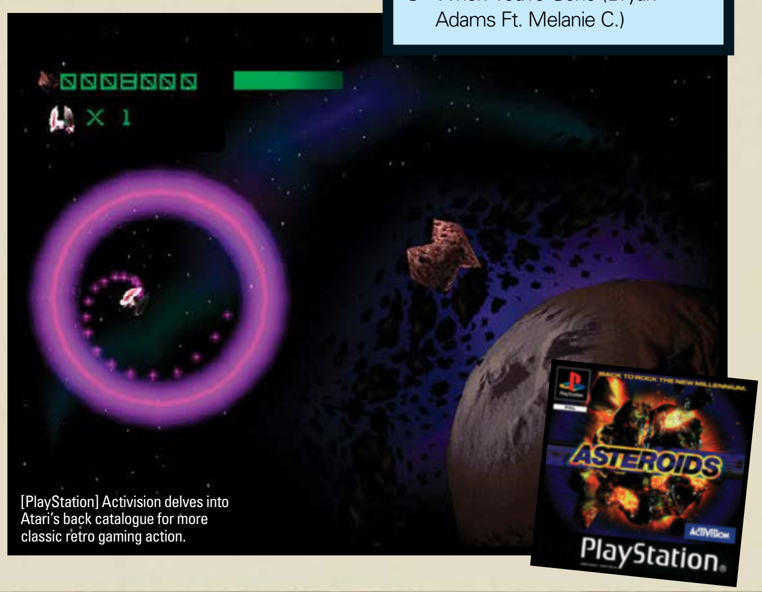
The force was strong with the N64 this month with *Star Wars: Rogue Squadron* being released. You play pilot Luke Skywalker in a fast-paced arcade shooter action game spread across 16 deliciously devised levels and with a choice of five classic *Star Wars* space craft to fly.

All levels take place on and above the surface of a variety of planets such as Tatooine and Hoth including the memorable battle between Rebel Snowspeeders and the plodding Imperial AT-ATs.

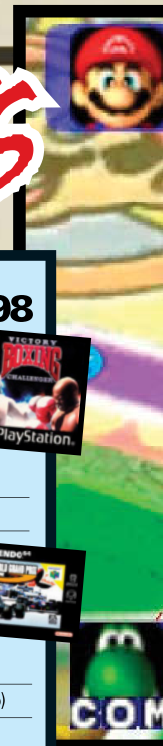
With missions challenges varying from straight-up 'destroy everything' to the more strategic rescue missions, *Rogue Squadron* would captivate the casual gamer but also give the *Star Wars* fanboys something to get extremely excited about.

Interesting missions, great 3D graphics with sound effects and music straight from the movies alongside a considered plotline helped make *Rogue Squadron* a deservedly huge hit for Nintendo.

Released this month by Sonic Team for Sega was the hotly anticipated new *Sonic The Hedgehog* game, *Sonic Adventure* for the Dreamcast. It was the blue hedgehog's first outing in a free roaming 3D game but *Adventure* still contained the familiar *Sonic* elements



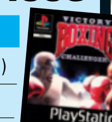

[PlayStation] Activision delves into Atari's back catalogue for more classic retro gaming action.



## CHARTS

### DECEMBER 1998

**PLAYSTATION**



1 Victory Boxing 2 (JVC)
2 Tekken 3 (Sony)
3 International Superstar Soccer Pro 98 (Konami)
4 MediEvil (Sony)
5 Colin McRae Rally (Codemasters)

**NINTENDO 64**

1 F-1 World Grand Prix (Video System Co.)
2 1080° Snowboarding (Nintendo)
3 Mission: Impossible (Infogrames)
4 Mortal Kombat (Midway)
5 WWF Warzone (Acclaim)

**PC**




1 Cannon Fodder (Sold Out)
2 FA Premier League Manager 99 (Electronic Arts)
3 Colin McRae Rally (Codemasters)
4 Klingon Honour Guard (MicroProse)
5 Rainbow Six (Red Storm)

**MUSIC**




1 Believe (Cher)
2 To You I Belong (B*Witched)
3 Chocolate Salty Balls (PS. I Love You) – (Chef)
4 Goodbye (Spice Girls)
5 When You're Gone (Bryan Adams Ft. Melanie C.)



[N64] Throw away those board games, plastic counters and pretend paper money, family gaming just got a lot more fun.

of blisteringly fast action, adventure and platforms a plenty.

You can play as one of seven characters including Sonic, Tails and Knuckles and your task is to stop the evil shenanigans of Doctor Eggman as he unleashes his evil plan of stealing the seven Chaos Emeralds and feeding them to the monster known as Chaos: The God Of Destruction.

With trial and adventure modes and multiple character stories with different goals for each, *Sonic Adventure* was an excellent release to showcase the Dreamcast and its potential.

After releasing an updated version of Atari's *Battlezone* at the beginning of the year, Activision were ending it with an equally retro release. New and improved for your rock blasting-pleasure was *Asteroids* on PlayStation and PC.

The gameplay was essentially the same. Blast big rocks, blast smaller rocks and don't get hit by anything. Enhancements were plentiful with interactive backgrounds, much improved graphics, a choice of ships and a whole swath of power-ups. Thankfully underneath the neon and eye-candy graphics was still the *Asteroids* game of old.

Only a handful of new coin-op cabinets were released this month. One of which was *Fighting Layer*, a standard 2D head-to-head fighting game much like *Street Fighter* in terms of gameplay. It was released by Arika, a Japanese games developer which had a hidden pedigree. Arika was created by a group of former Capcom employees foremost of which was the founder Akira Nishitani. His first name was reversed to provide the company name.

Mr Nishitani was co-designer on Capcom's *Street Fighter II* and later Nishitani and Arika continued developing for Capcom most notably with the *Street Fighter EX* series.

*Fighting Layer* was a solid fighting game with nice characters, including two borrowed from *Street Fighter EX Plus*, but ultimately it remained stuck in anonymous mediocrity. It was a Japanese-only arcade release and also never made an appearance on any other games system. A shame as it deserved a wider audience.

Last up was *The House Of The Dead 2* by Sega. The survival horror first-person on-rails shooter was more of the same zombie destroying mayhem. It was also the first game released on Sega's new NAOMI (New Arcade Operations Machine Idea) hardware. *The House Of The Dead 2* was later ported to Sega's Dreamcast. Unsurprising as both Dreamcast and NAOMI shared hardware components.

Released on PC and Mac was *Falcon 4.0*, the latest in the ongoing combat simulator series by MicroProse. Based on the F16-Fighting Falcon, the game was not purely a flight simulator but a detailed strategic war game set in Korea.

*Falcon 4.0* was daunting from the off with its realistic avionics that make even the simplest actions appear overly complicated and with your attention torn between keeping your Falcon in the sky and watching how the real-time war below you is panning out while simultaneously running missions made the learning curve something akin to a vertical straight line. Your skin would horripilate with the realisation of the size of the task in hand. It was hard… and not just normal hard, proper brick hard with extra added hardness for good measure.

Exceptionally testing it may have been but investing substantial time into developing your flying and strategic skills would leave you with a game that you would keep returning to indefinitely. *


[Dreamcast] Sonic is back with lots of friends in his first open world 3D adventure.


[Nintendo 64] *Star Wars* action and the Millennium Falcon as a hidden ship. What's not to like?


[Arcade] From the people who developed *Street Fighter EX* came *Fighting Layer*.

## NEWS DECEMBER 1998

There were several notable movies released during the month.
4 December saw the remake of Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* horror film get its world premiere. The movie was unusual in that it closely followed the original 1960 film shot-for-shot with virtually the same dialogue. Vince Vaughn played Norman Bates, the psychopath and keeper of crispy mothers but, unlike the original, the new *Psycho* flopped.

5 December saw *Jack Frost* enjoy its world premiere. This obligatory Christmas movie starred Michael Keaton as a family man killed in a road traffic accident but returns as a snowman who must make peace with his son before finally shuffling off to the choir invisible.

15 December saw the UK premiere of *Star Trek: Insurrection* in cinemas. The ninth *Star Trek* film featured the cast of *The Next Generation* TV series. Captain Picard uncovers a Federation-led conspiracy against a planet. Picard rebels and much phaser blasting follows. *Insurrection* was notable for being directed by Jonathan Frakes who also played the character Lieutenant Commander Riker. However, reaction to the film was mixed.

Among the music albums released in December, the cream of a fairly small crop were; *Ladies & Gentlemen: The Best Of George Michael* (George Michael), *Out In The Fields: The Best Of Gary Moore* (Gary Moore) and interestingly *The Legend Of Zelda: The Ocarina Of Time Original Soundtrack* (Koji Kondo) although this was initially only available in Japan. Other territories got their official release at a later date.

## THIS MONTH IN…

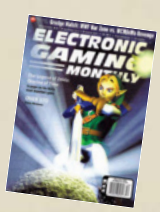
### COMPUTER & VIDEOGAMES

*C&VG* had news on Sony's PocketStation, a peripheral for the PlayStation with personal organiser facilities all wrapped with a lovely infrared option to swap details with other like-minded PocketStation owners. It was Sony's response to Sega's VMU for the Dreamcast.



### ELECTRONIC GAMING MONTHLY

*EGM* confirmed that the highly contentious fighting game *Thrill Kill* had been cancelled. Electronic Arts had bought assets, including *Thrill Kill*, from developer Virgin Games but decided, despite being complete, that it was too violent and explicit.



### PC ZONE

Misery engulfed *PC Zone*. John Romero, designer of *Quake*, had died… except he hadn't. Some chap with the same name had and misinformation reigned supreme. Vladimir Pokhilko, co-developer of *Tetris*, had died, though. He committed suicide after murdering his wife and son after suffering financial difficulties.



retro GAMER.net READER'S REVIVAL



# Lotus Esprit Turbo Challenge

"IT DON'T MATTER IF YOU WIN BY AN INCH OR A MILE. WINNING'S WINNING"

#95

» GREMLIN GRAPHICS » AMSTRAD CPC » 1990

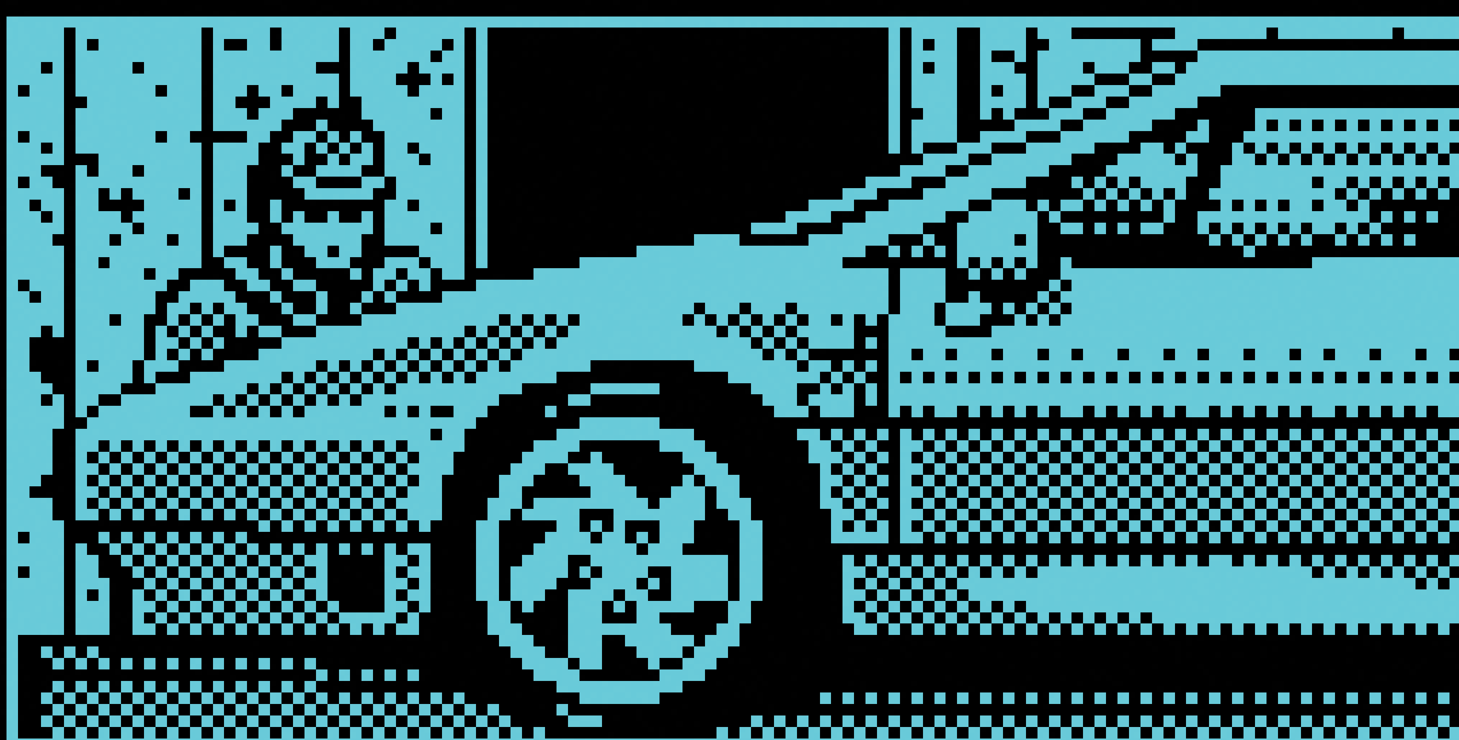
**It may not look it, but *Lotus Esprit* was quite probably the finest racing game to grace the CPC.** If you wanted more arcade thrills and excitement, then the excellent conversion of *Chase HQ* was the place to go, but for a more grounded and realistic experience, it was Gremlin's racing game all the way.

Played out in what was becoming Gremlin's trademark Mode 1 graphics, things look a little drab but this is more than made up for with the speed and extra detail, plus the option for a second player is always a welcome one. What made *Lotus* great, to my mind, was that unlike other racers such of the time, there was no zipping ahead to first place and staying there, even if you were a fairly well-versed driver. Getting to pole position was a suitably arduous task and one that you probably wouldn't make over most races.

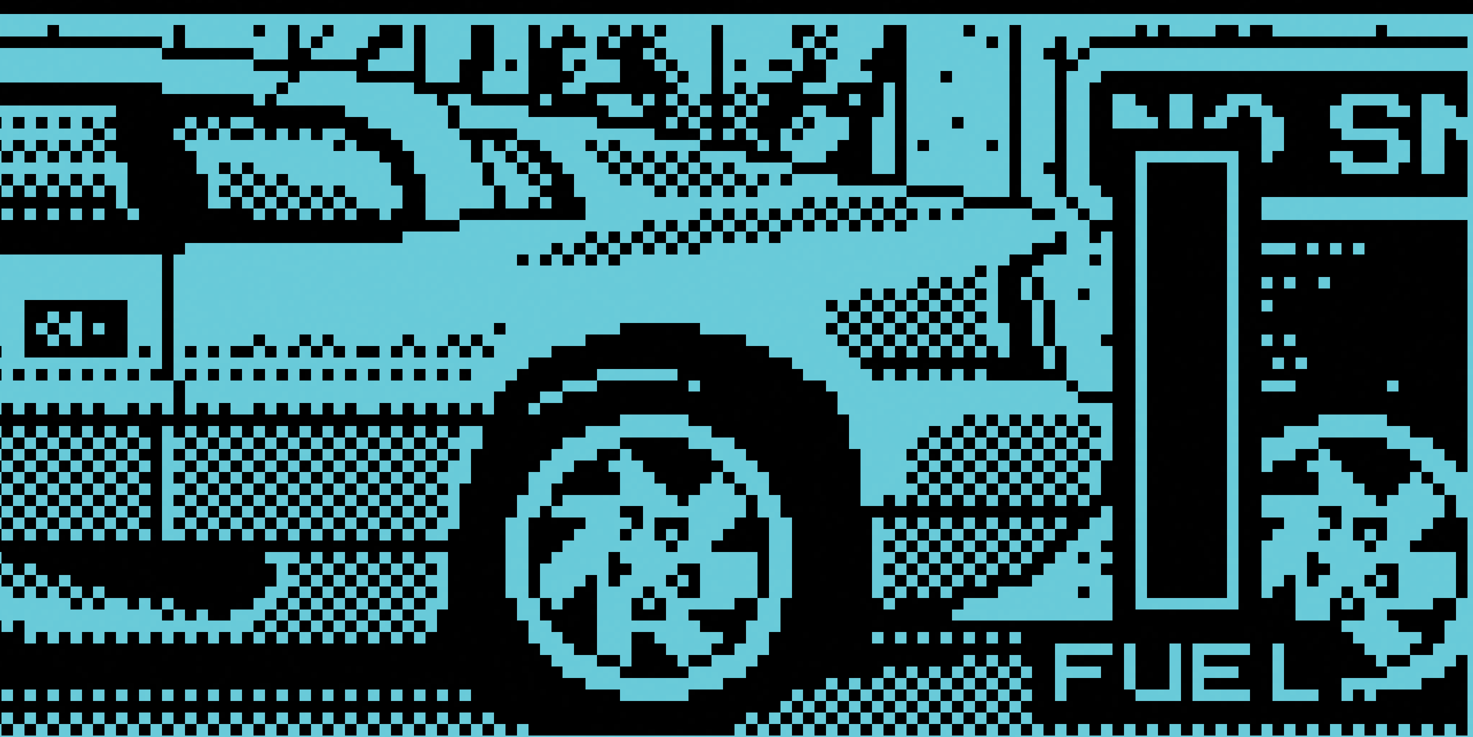
However, it did come with three difficulty levels so even inexperienced players could enjoy things. Easy was a seven-track race around the world, medium upped it to ten tracks and hard all the way to 15, so there was plenty of scope for all comers. On harder, longer tracks you even needed to refuel at times, though sometimes it was worth the gamble not to. However, sometimes that gamble wouldn't pay off, resulting in your Lotus spluttering to an embarrassing stop. Such is life.

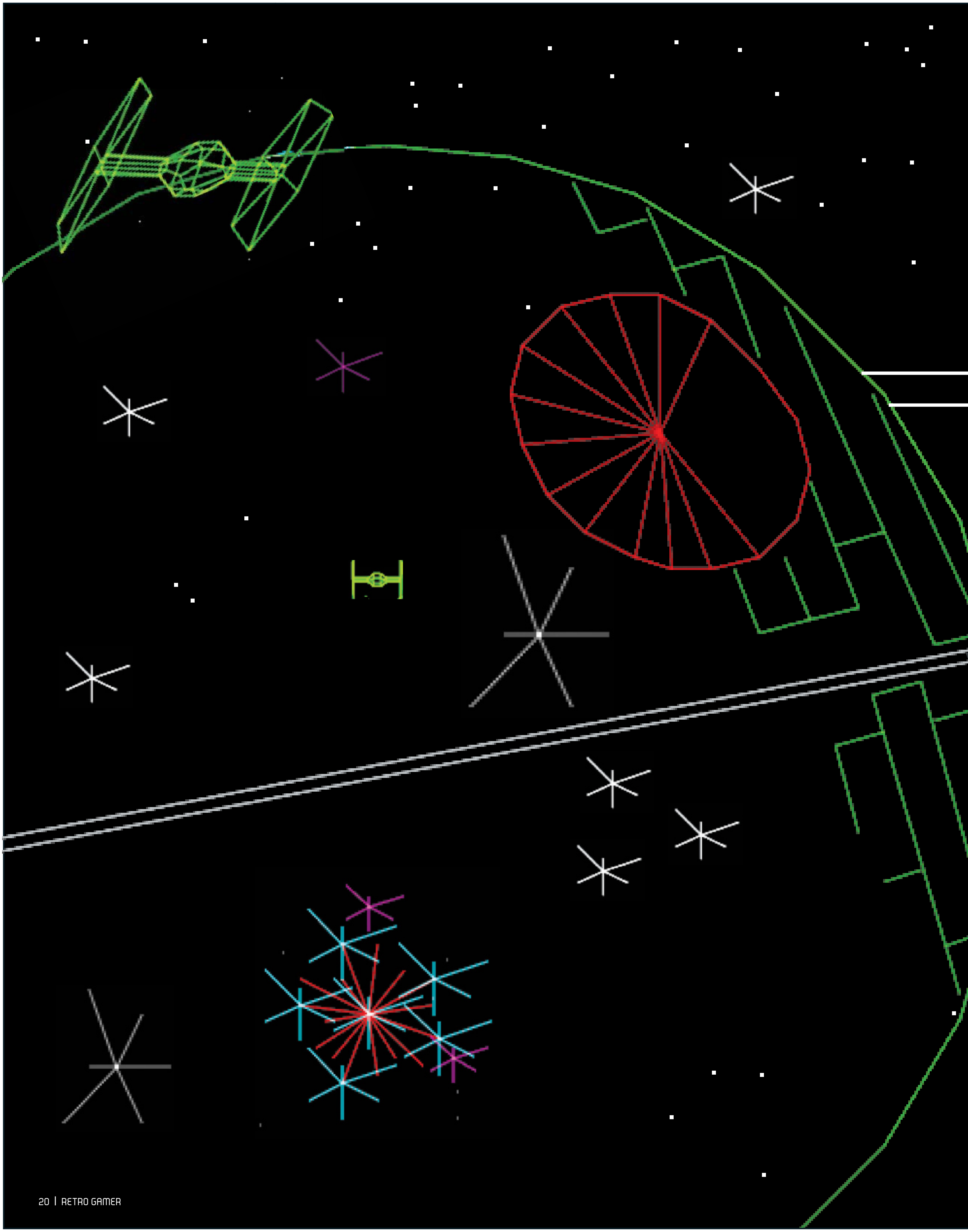
What's more, if you completed the game in full and sent off the password to Gremlin's offices, they would send you a certificate of authenticity. Ah, the good old days, eh?

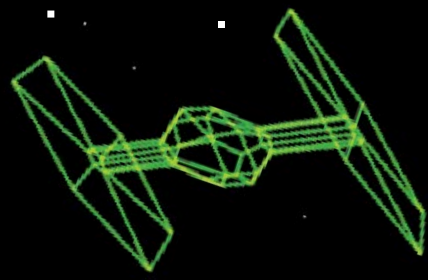
**DARREN CARLE**




Gear:5
Speed:139
Rpm:
Fuel:
Lap: 1/4


FUEL





# STAR WARS

**OBI-WAN KENOBI IS GONE BUT HIS PRESENCE IS STILL FELT WITHIN THE FORCE. THE DEATH STAR, UNDER THE COMMAND OF THE EMPIRE, NEARS THE SECRET REBEL BASE ON YAVIN IV. JOIN GRAEME MASON, NICK THORPE AND THE REBEL ALLIANCE TO STOP THE EMPIRE AND DESTROY THE LETHAL BATTLE STATION. MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU!**

Thanks to a recent archaeological dig and years of bad press, it's fair to say that when people bring up movie licences and Atari, a rather unpleasant game comes to mind. Even its most ardent of fans would doubtless admit that Atari didn't create the greatest of games in the home console version of the Spielberg movie, *E.T.*, even if it's not quite as bad as history suggests. But to concentrate on the negative is to do Atari a disservice, as the company is also responsible for one of the very best movie tie-ins of the early-Eighties – and it's not hard to see why. *Star Wars* is a very different type of IP to *E.T.*, with a dramatic and action-oriented tone that seems to perfectly suit the medium of videogames.

# ARCADE PERFECT

Atari's coin-op was a thing of beauty




**READERS REMEMBER**

"Not the first game to carry the name, and oddly late to the party, but it gets things spot on. Its incredibly immersive and as soon as you put 10p in its slot, you're in the *Star Wars* universe. This is the one game that always makes me feel like I'm there, fighting for the rebellion. Slick vectors don't hurt, giving it a timeless quality that still looks good now, while the yoke controller offers precision control so any mistakes are yours alone. The clips from the movie are the icing on the cake. Home ports were pretty good, too."

**ANTIRIAD2097**

### MARQUEE

■ *Star Wars*' marquee merged two of its famous vehicles with some cool vector lines.

### SCREEN

■ *Star Wars*' beautiful clean vectors shone through this horizontally-orientated CRT monitor.

### SURROUNDING THE CONTROLLER

■ They may only be decals, but the surrounding of the controller helped immerse the player into the cockpit of the X-wing.

### AROUND THE SCREEN

■ Plenty of bespoke moulded plastic around here in an attempt to mimic the film's spacecraft design.

### COIN SLOT SURROUND

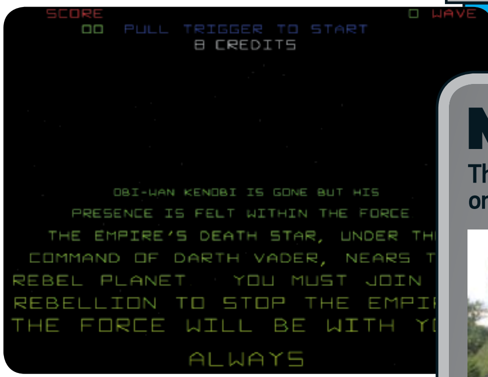
■ Schematic-style images of the Death Star adorn the front of the cab.

### SIDE ART

■ Darth Vader and his TIE fighter feature prominently on this impressive side graphic.

Yet, until the release of this famous arcade game, fans had been left colder than a Hoth winter by the pixelated translations of their favourite sci-fi trilogy. The Atari 2600 and Mattel Intellivision both had the lukewarm *The Empire Strikes Back*, and 2600 owners also got to play the overhead lightsaber game, *Jedi Arena*. While their developers had nothing to be ashamed about in these titles, there was massive unrealised potential in the *Star Wars* licence.

*Star Wars: A New Hope* was released in 1977, when the early videogame consoles and home computers had little chance of recreating the movie's rousing thrills. The first seeds of the game were sown in 1980 when Atari released vector-graphics classic *Battlezone*. Thanks to its iconic controller and beautiful, clean-lined graphics, the tank shooter was a big hit and was also converted by Atari into the *Bradley Trainer*, a military simulator aimed at training drivers for the tank of the same name. While *Star Wars*' fast-moving vector graphics would be a far cry from the ponderous, land-locked, enemies of *Battlezone*, there was no doubt this was a key moment – the technology was catching up. Two years later came the Disney movie *Tron*, the videogame industry went cinema-crazy, and old IPs were enthusiastically revisited. With the third film of the *Star Wars* trilogy, *Return Of The Jedi*, impending, an arcade interpretation of the box-office smash first film seemed an obvious choice. Atari designer Mike Hally led a dedicated team of six designers and coders who spent six months creating the game. Mike himself had already had success as designer of *Gravitar*, *Star Wars* would prove to be an even bigger hit.




» [Arcade] The famous title crawl precedes the game.

Mike's remit from Atari was simple: make a great game. From IP holder Lucasfilm, it was a slightly different story. George Lucas was notoriously picky about how the *Star Wars* licence was used, and the possibilities that the new technology presented had to be rigidly shoehorned into *Star Wars* lore. Perhaps influenced by another Atari title, the 2600 game *Star Raiders*, *Star Wars* took shape as a space-based shoot-'em-up, logically focusing on the climactic battle over the rebel hideout on Yavin IV. This gave the designers the opportunity to let the player assume on the role of hero Luke Skywalker, taking on a multitude of TIE fighters, the surface of the Death Star and the famous trench run. There were rules to be followed, however. Darth Vader could make an appearance but his TIE fighter could not be destroyed; and the hero could not really be killed, at least not in a graphic way. Atari worked closely with Lucasfilm to make sure the game met their requirements.

The graphics of *Star Wars* were a world away from those of *Battlezone* – where tanks are sluggish vehicles, the space combat of *Star Wars* was dynamic and fast-paced. However, vectors




**YOKE**
■ Inspired by the *Bradley Trainer*, the *Star Wars arcade* controller was intuitive and a superb piece of design.

**READERS REMEMBER**
"First encountering the sit-down cabinet with that amazing steering-wheel joystick hybrid... thing, glowing wireframe graphics and the incredible sound was a defining experience for me as a six-year-old. Awesome stuff!"
**POB**

## MIKE HALLY

### The Atari coin-op veteran revisits one of his most popular arcade games



**How did you feel when you were asked to lead the *Star Wars* project?**
I think that was the most excited I've ever been in my life! They could've picked people like Ed Logg or Ed Rotberg, who had superiority over me, and I'd come off *Gravitar* and *Akka Arrh* but for some reason they choose me to run the project and design the game. I didn't know how much work it was going to be but I wanted to make sure I got the best team and made the best game. *Star Wars* was such an important title. I just wanted to make sure it was top-notch.

**Was it a difficult project to lead?**
I told them about some hardware we had in development that would be perfect for it but it still took a long time to develop, about a year and a half, which was a long time for a coin-op game back then. It seems simple now but it was kind of 3D, we had to develop the hardware, the cabinet, the controller, that was key to how it played. Then we had to get it approved by Lucas, which added more time.

**The fact the original *Star Wars* coin-op uses vector graphics on an XY display gives it a timeless feel. How key was that visual approach to the game?**
The thing was if you were doing a space game using the XY display, it's dark, there are stars... it's perfect! As long as you don't have to do tons of buildings or realistic stuff you don't need raster. It was the hardware we had and XY was still the in thing in coin-op at the time.

**Including speech added to the atmosphere of the game. Was that tricky to implement?**
The dialogue had some great lines I could take out but yeah, the speech was really hard to do. So was the music. Everything took time!

**Everyone remembers the cockpit cabinet which you could actually sit in and dream that you were actually flying an X-wing. Was that the plan from the start?**
We knew it would be perfect for a sit-down cab as well as a stand-up. That's why we made such cool mouldings round the monitor and used this see-through dark Perspex, so people could see what was going on. And we spent a long time working on the controller so it felt just right.

TURN TO PAGE 92 FOR THE FULL INTERVIEW

***Star Wars* invariably gets named as one of the all-time favourite coin-ops. Why do you think it's so fondly remembered?**
It's easy to play but also really challenging and who doesn't love *Star Wars*? You really felt like Luke and you really felt like you'd destroyed the Death Star. It's absolutely the best game I've made.

# ANDY CRAVEN

**Vektor Grafix co-founder on the home conversions of Star Wars**



**Was *Star Wars* Vektor Grafix's first game?**
Yes, we had just started the company. Mark (Strachan) and Dominic (Wheatley, Domark founders), were looking at the demo I had written and told me it would be perfect for a contract they had just won. 'What contract?' I asked and when they replied '*Star Wars*', I thought 'F**k me! *Star Wars*!'

**Which versions did you have a hand in personally?**
I was heavily involved in the Z80 versions and the PC version the following year, 1988.

**Were you all *Star Wars* fans?**
Hell, yeah. They gave us a coin-op to use and it was played 24/7. They also lent us a remote-controlled real R2-D2, which was awesome.

**How did the Spectrum and Commodore 64 versions compare?**
We had to play around with a number the number of visible objects to strike a balance on the Spectrum. It wasn't as slow as the C64 version – our C64 coder, Ian Martin, was a great coder and really did his best with it.

**What did you think of the game *3D Starstrike* by Realtime games?**
I thought it was great. The guys at Realtime were good friends of ours. In fact, Ian Oliver and I started Cross Products together and created SNASM, the cross development system.

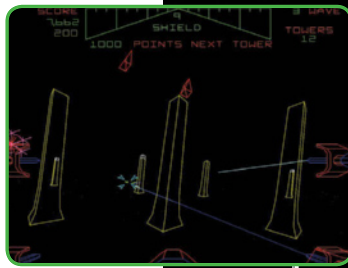
**What's your fondest memory of working on *Star Wars*?**
Getting to visit the Skywalker ranch and sitting in the downstairs cinema where George Lucas first showed the *Star Wars* rushes. Watching that very clip was amazing – he used WWII Spitfire footage for the TIE fighter scenes.

were not just stylistically good for the game, the 3D technology was more or less essential to show the enemy TIE fighters swooping in from all angles. What's more, it's just more fun to watch them shatter into a shower of polygonal pieces. The display was not the only element borrowed from *Battlezone*, either. Atari rightly identified that this was an opportunity to provide a unique gaming experience and a key facet of this was the controller, which was directly inspired by the adapted controller to Atari's *Bradley Trainer* military game. Providing the player with the intuitive yoke to control the X-wing fighter (complete with fire buttons modelled on the movie) proved to be a master stroke. Following it up with a sit-down cabinet, simulating the inside of the craft, complete with speakers, was genius.

**Once ensconced within, the player was faced with choosing three difficulties,** easy, medium or hard, the latter two offering scoring bonuses. The game then begins in space with the Death Star lurking ominously in the background. The fast laser beams would be nigh-on impossible to avoid, so Atari created fireballs for the enemy TIE fighters, glittering collections of shield-stripping energy that resembled angry snowflakes. These hung around on the screen long enough for the player to shoot at them, which neutralised them. Depending on the dip-switch setting, the X-wing had a certain amount of shields, which could absorb one hit each. Lose them all and it was game over.

After having dodged enemy fire and taken out a few TIE fighters, the game shifts to the surface of the Death Star. In glorious vector beauty, a multitude of rectangular towers and turrets spit more fireballs at Red Five. These must be avoided or shot until the player reaches the trench and begins the deadly run to the Death Star's convenient weakness, the exhaust port. The trench is peppered with guns that again launch those pesky fireballs in the player's direction. These can be shot or avoided as your X-wing speeds towards its fateful destination, dodging the catwalks that become more frequent with each wave. Finally the exhaust port appears – miss and you'll have to attempt the run again, but if you can make one well-timed shot, the Death Star is history. If all this sounds *exhausting* (groan) then think again. Thanks to designer Mike Hally, even playing *Star Wars* for the first time can produce this spine-tingling result.

For Atari's ingenious move was to make the destruction of the Death Star a multiple occurrence. While not in keeping with the movie, this meant that undergoing the awesome thrill of stopping the Empire could be experienced easily, and also multiple times. And it was an experience that once you tasted, you wanted more of. You weren't just playing at being part ▶



» [Arcade] Make sure to aim for the peak of the towers!



» [Arcade] Skimming the surface of the Death Star.




» [Arcade] Now let's blow this thing and go home!

**READERS REMEMBER**

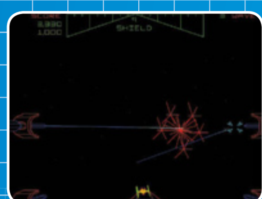
"I can still see and hear the original arcade game- even if the graphics were basic, it felt like you were heading down to the Death Star, to pull off that trench run. I've no idea if it'd hold up today, but it made a big impression at the time."

**RUMBLECAT**

# HOW TO PLAY



1 Things soon start to hot up in outer space. As this part is timed, there is no need to take out the TIE fighters – simply make sure you get those shield-sapping fireballs and survive through to the end.



2 Upon entering the famous Death Star trench, the words 'Use The Force' appear. Negotiate the narrow corridor without firing a shot and a special bonus is awarded. This approach will not be easy.



3 On the later waves the trench will include a myriad of catwalks, deviously placed such as the ones you can see above. Ignore shooting the guns and focus on dodging these and the odd fireball.



4 By wave two, Darth Vader's TIE fighter appears. It can't be destroyed, but each hit you land yields a 2000 point bonus. Rumours of a shield bonus should you hit it 27 times were later disproven.

**READERS REMEMBER**

"The first game that ever nailed the 'you are in the film' feel for any movie, even though the graphics were only wireframe – mostly down to the sound effects, sampled from the movies and played back in stereo – you could track the TIE fighters off screen by which side their audio came in from, I'm sure. And the movie samples as you hit the trench ('I'm going in'), lost your shields ('They got R2!'), approached the end ('Use the force, Luke') and hit the target ('Great shot, kid!') were hugely evocative."

**SMAC**

"Providing the player with the intuitive yoke to control the nippy X-wing fighter proved to be a master stroke"

# MARK STRACHAN

**Domark's Mark Strachan talks about acquiring the rights to the Star Wars arcade game**



**Were you worried about licensing such an old game?**
Not at all. It was a great game and a great licence. It was a favourite of us all and the fact it was vector graphics in no way detracted from the enjoyment of the gameplay.

**How did you go about getting the licence?**
I seem to recall we contacted LucasArts at Lucas Ranch which to our amazement informed us that no-one had picked it up for use on home computers. Sadly we didn't get to meet George Lucas.

**As simple as that?**
Well, we also had to obtain a licence from Atari Games, but a trip to the United States got us both of them, and off we went.

**How did Vektor Grafix get on board with the project?**
[Vektor Grafix] seemed an obvious choice to us and I dealt with Andy Craven – a genius.

**Which home port did you enjoy the most?**
The Amiga version was by far my favourite. I think I played that more than any other Domark game. We also obtained the rights to The *Empire Strikes Back* and *Return Of The Jedi*, although I recall the latter being the weakest of the arcade games.

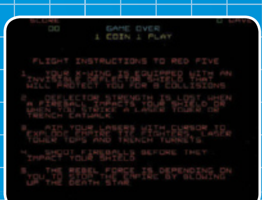
**How well did *Star Wars* sell?**
Really well. I cannot recall the exact numbers, but *Star Wars* really helped put us on the map after our *James Bond* games.



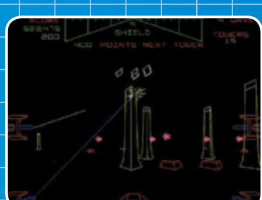
5 In the second section, set on the surface of the Death Star, towers spit fireballs at Red Five. Taking the towers out helps your score and you are also able to shoot fireballs through the towers themselves.



6 Having made it through space, across the surface of the Death Star and through the trench, here is your destination: the exhaust port. Watch for the trench emptying before letting loose those torpedoes!



7 During the game's attract mode, steering the flight yoke to the far left reveals a set of instructions, while going in the opposite direction displays the high score table. Obi-Wan, despite being dead, is still top!



8 The surface level has a special systematic scoring procedure, making it possible to net impressive bonuses. Additionally, destroy of all towers and a sizeable windfall is bestowed upon you.

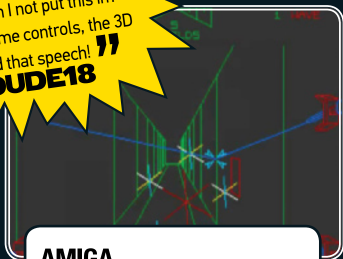
# CONVERSION CAPERS

Your guide to the best and worst ports of the classic arcade game

**READERS REMEMBER**

"How can I not put this in? The sublime controls, the 3D gameplay and that speech!"

**THEDUDE18**



## AMIGA

Vektor Grafix created a fine and almost arcade-perfect version of the aging coin-op for the Commodore Amiga, complete with sampled voices from the movie, which retained the atmosphere of the original. The inclusion of mouse control greatly improved this version over the 8-bits, and maybe even over the arcade original. Huge fun for a short blast.



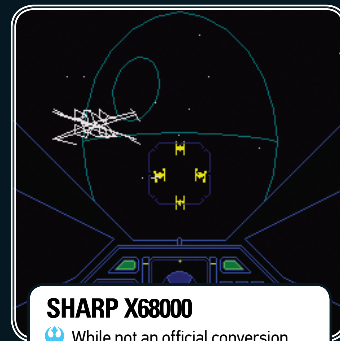
## ATARI ST

A decent conversion, as you might expect, and like the Amiga version, also with the added bonus of digitized speech and mouse control. The fast-paced action is a given, and the end result is another satisfying conversion that will test your blasting skills to the limit.

## COMMODORE 64 (VERSION 1)

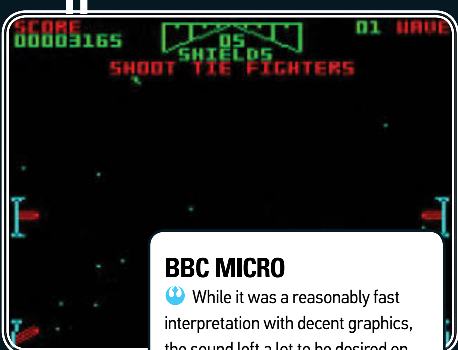
The first conversion of *Star Wars* on the Commodore 64 appeared shortly after the arcade machine in 1983. Sensibly opting for sprite-based graphics rather than vector, it's a solid conversion from Parker Brothers despite losing some of the original's features, such as the difficulty settings.





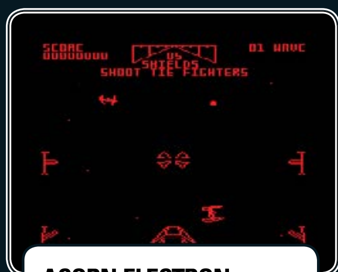
## SHARP X68000

While not an official conversion, this game is well worth a mention. From its introduction, which features the beginning of the film converted into vector graphics, *Star Wars Attack On The Death Star* is a superb game with added speech, greater variation and a full cockpit view.




## BBC MICRO

While it was a reasonably fast interpretation with decent graphics, the sound left a lot to be desired on the BBC, with the X-wing's laser fire particularly grating.




## ACORN ELECTRON

While many of these conversions emulate the speed of the original, if nothing else, this Electron version fails even in this respect. A monochrome display, slow response and stocky graphics make this one of the more inferior conversions. The force is not strong in this one.

## ZX SPECTRUM

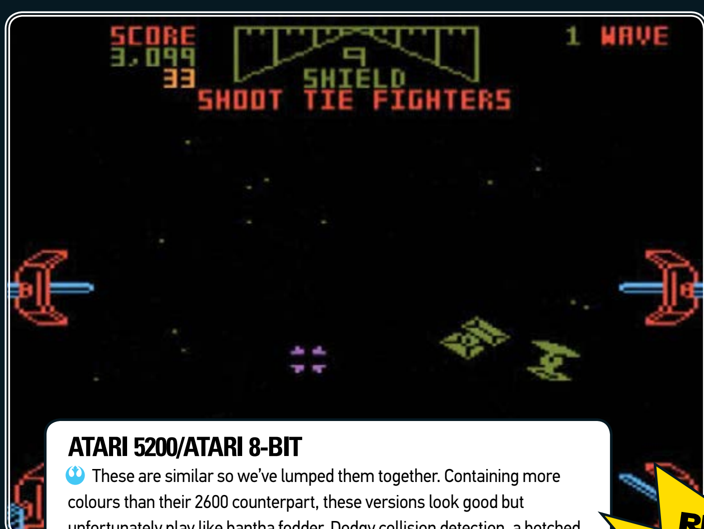
Despite infamously having no in-game sound, *Star Wars* on the Spectrum was a decent game that moved at a fair lick thanks to Vektor Grafix. Graphically accurate (although a little jerkier than the arcade game) and speedy, it's a thoroughly decent conversion, best played with the original soundtrack in your CD player.





## ATARI 2600

The vector graphics were disposed of for this conversion to the Atari VCS by Parker Brothers. There's a host of other changes, notably only two lasers on the X-wing fighter, but in all fairness it's a credible effort.

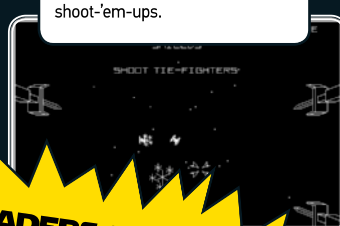



## ATARI 5200/ATARI 8-BIT

These are similar so we've lumped them together. Containing more colours than their 2600 counterpart, these versions look good but unfortunately play like bantha fodder. Dodgy collision detection, a botched control scheme (not helped by the absence of a yoke of course) and a notably poor Death Star explosion make this far from *Star Wars*' finest hour.

## MAC

Like the PC version, this was published by Broderbund in the US via a deal with Domark, but still developed by Vektor Grafix. The stark monochrome display doesn't harm the game and it's a respectable version on a format not renowned for fast-paced shoot-'em-ups.






## COMMODORE 64 (VERSION 2)

While admittedly the Commodore 64 wasn't best suited to vector graphics, games such as *Mercenary* proved that it could be done with success. Unfortunately the second conversion of *Star Wars*, this time from Domark, looked good but lacked any of the pace and excitement of the legendary coin-op. A disappointment.

**READERS REMEMBER**

"The original sit-down vector cabinet was absolutely the best *Star Wars* game ever. Flying the X-wing with that great controller with all the digitised voices in the cockpit itself – unbeatable."

**JOEFISH**



## AMSTRAD

While graphically very faithful, and offering some crunching sound effects, the Amstrad version, like other 8-bits, suffers from slowdown, especially during the Death Star surface stage. This can make the game frustrating to play at times, but it remains one of the best of the 8-bit home computer conversions.



## COLECOVISION

The first thing that strikes you regarding this version is the extra detail that the X-wing's guns suddenly possess. Away from graphical niceties, the ColecoVision has a decent stab at converting the arcade original, although the cursor movement is too rapid for our liking.



## PC-DOS

Despite some interminable sound effects and washed-out colours, the PC version of *Star Wars*, again developed by Vektor Grafix, moves at an impressive lick. It also boasts mouse support, which is about the only way to have any hope against the speed of the enemy attacks.

# CIARAN GULTNIEKS

**Vektor Grafix's Ciaran Gultnieks takes us through his experiences developing the legendary hit arcade game**



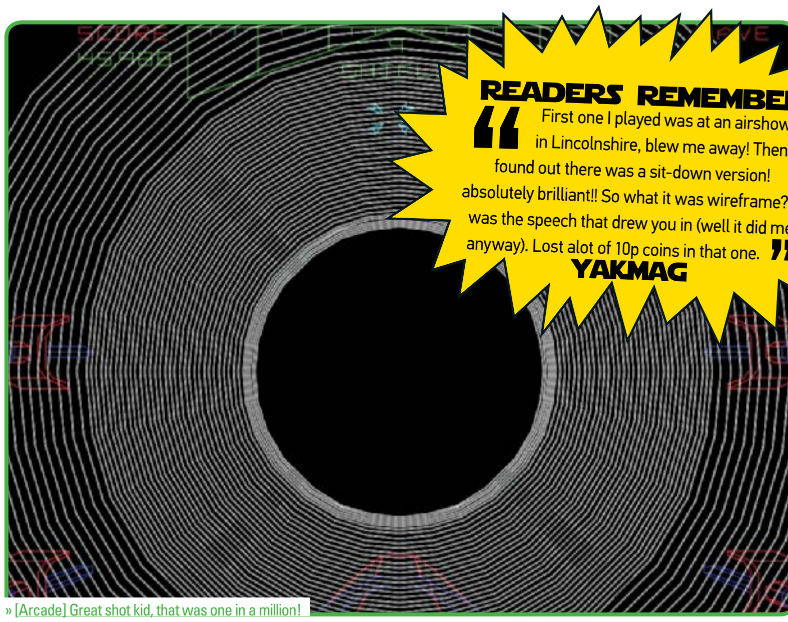
**How did you get involved with *Star Wars*?**
I had been working at Vektor Grafix for a few months, having started as their first employee. I guess I got onto it because there was no-one else! Domark had the licence for Europe and it commissioned us to do the work.

**Did you have the arcade machine to play and learn on?**
Yep, I had it right next to my desk which was an amazing experience to a 16-year-old who had only previously encountered arcade machines during occasional visits to the seaside.

**Were you aware of the various clones of the game such as *3D Starstrike*?**
More than aware. Realtime Games, developers of *Starstrike*, were – completely by coincidence – two doors down the corridor from us. And I'd played their games extensively, so basically found myself with an arcade machine by my desk and my childhood heroes working next door but one!

**The Spectrum version infamously lacked any sound or music.**
If I recall correctly, it was billed as having no sound in order to give you the maximum performance. This was, to put it politely, marketing speak. In fact, the publishers wanted the game 'right now' and there was simply no time available for sound.

**Who did you end up working with on the game?**
Myself and Andy Craven [co-founder of Vektor Grafix along with Danny Gallagher] were the developers on the Spectrum, Amstrad and PC versions. It took eight weeks from start to finish. I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to work on it and I guess it put Vektor Grafix on the map and probably set it up financially.



» [Arcade] Great shot kid, that was one in a million!

### READERS REMEMBER

"First one I played was at an airshow in Lincolnshire, blew me away! Then I found out there was a sit-down version! absolutely brilliant!! So what it was wireframe? It was the speech that drew you in (well it did me anyway). Lost alot of 10p coins in that one."
**YAKMAG**

> **"Atari's ingenious move was to make the destruction of the Death Star a multiple occurrence"**

of the Rebel Alliance – the first-person 3D view allowed you to truly feel as if you were piloting an X-wing. Not only that, but the voice clips from the film do an excellent job of keeping you immersed. Between R2-D2's beeps and Obi-Wan Kenobi's voice imploring you to trust him and "use the force" over the speakers, you felt as if you were Luke Skywalker himself as long as you were in that cabinet. For *Star Wars* fanatics, it was wish fulfilment at its finest.

**The game's appeal didn't depend on whether or not you'd enjoyed the film. With** its range of special bonuses, *Star Wars* became an addictive score-attack game. Such bonuses include an end-of-wave 5000 points for each shield remaining; a progressively-increasing force-inspired hand-out for not firing during the trench run and a 50,000 award for destroying all the towers in phase two. In a record set in 1986, David Palmer remains the most skilled pilot, attaining an incredible score of 31,660,614 with just six starting shields and no bonus shields, according to website Twin Galaxies. Under factory settings, players could carry on indefinitely, leading to some impressive endurance records. Brandon Erickson's 2005 record for a single credit play stands at 54 hours, and in June 1985, the three-player team of Flavio Tozzi, Dave Roberts and Mike Ohren managed five days, two hours and 26 minutes.

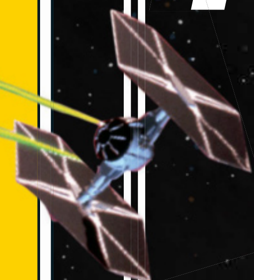
Releasing alongside *Return Of The Jedi* in mid-1983, *Star Wars* was a phenomenal success for Atari. Over 10,000 of the game's upright cabinets were built, alongside 2,450 sit-down cabinets – making it the last of Atari's arcade games to crack the 10,000 unit mark until *Area 51* 12 years later. The game's sales meant that it quickly made its way to home formats – first from Parker Brothers in 1983 and 1984, and then later from Domark in 1987 and 1988. A sequel was also inevitable, but rather oddly, Atari went for the third film, *Return Of The Jedi*, for the next game. Also, strangely, it jettisoned the vector graphics in favour of an isometric sprite-based display, which although more varied, didn't hold the immediacy of the original. *The Empire Strikes Back* followed a year later (1985), and returned to the vector graphics style. The final section saw the player navigating an asteroid field rather than escaping Bespin. Neither game was as successful as the original, particularly as *The Empire Strikes Back* was only available as a conversion kit for *Star Wars* cabinets.

Today, the *Star Wars* coin-op remains a revered game, spoken of in nostalgic-laden tones by those of us old enough to remember sitting in that cockpit, with friends and spectators crowding the sides, and Obi-Wan Kenobi himself offering warm encouragement through the speakers behind. Remember, the force will be with you. Always.




» [Arcade] Obi-Wan leads the high score table.





# THE GREATEST STAR WARS GAMES EVER

**Nick Thorpe and Darran Jones reveal your favourite games from the long-running series. Prepare for some surprises…**

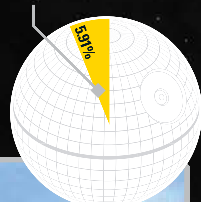
## DASH WHO?




### Star Wars: Shadows Of The Empire 1996

10 Set between *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return Of The Jedi*, *Shadows Of The Empire* told the story of the mercenary Dash Rendar, who found himself tangled up in the affairs of the main *Star Wars* cast and had to participate in space shooting, speeder sections and on-foot adventuring. As one of the very earliest N64 games, this turned heads as a showcase for its platform and as one of the very first full-3D *Star Wars* games. It didn't receive stellar reviews, but it's no doubt that it made a strong first impression – the early part of the game, in which you blast away at walkers on Hoth, is still a classic.

PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL VOTES



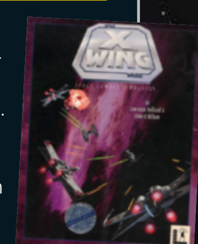




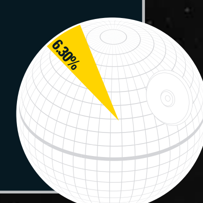


## RED FIVE STANDING BY

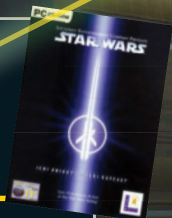
### Star Wars: X-Wing 1993




9 If you were a *Star Wars* fan in the early-Nineties, this combat simulator almost single-handedly justified PC ownership. The game had the daunting task of competing against the likes of *Wing Commander*, but managed to trump them on a graphical level – in an era when most games were still throwing sprites around the screen, *X-Wing* rendered enemy TIE fighters and other objects in full 3D. Mission design required an incredibly high level of execution from players, but that barely mattered when you had control of the iconic Rebel craft. In fact, so complete was your control that you even had to manage energy between shields, engines and weapons.



# WHEN JEDI KNIGHTS BECAME COOL







## Star Wars Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast 2002

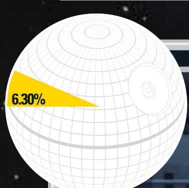
8 Although *Jedi Knight II* wasn't the first *Star Wars* game to focus on a Jedi Knight's powers, it's arguably the first that captured the awesome power of the Jedi that had constantly been hinted at in the movies.

Although you were able to use a lightsaber in *Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II,* its use was massively amplified in the sequel, allowing for some genuinely thrilling lightsaber battles with many of the game's foes and chief villains. Kyle has access to three distinct lightsaber styles: fast, medium and strong, all of which have distinctive benefits and combos that are exclusive to each style. It effectively offers three ways of playing the game depending on the player's taste and is complemented by enhanced powers that build on the ones introduced in *Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II.*

Force Powers feature in both the single player and multiplayer modes, but are far more important in the latter due to players being divided into both Lights Siders and Dark Siders. As you'd imagine the powers from the dark side are aggressive, while those of Light Siders focus on healing and protection. There are also Neutral powers that can be used by both sides. Kyle himself now has a selection from both sides in the main campaign, which makes him an powerful adversary.

*The Force Unleashed* may have ended up pushing the powers of the Jedi to their limits (you pull down a Star Destroyer for goodness sake) but it's a weaker game than *Jedi Outcast,* which explains why it ended up sitting at 31 on your list.

> "Kyle has access to three distinct lightsaber styles: fast, medium and strong"













# GAMING'S GREATEST STAR WARS SECRET

## Star Wars: Rogue Squadron 1998

7 While *Rogue Squadron* was a entertaining mission-based arcade shooter, we'd argue it's just as notable for having one of the coolest secrets of any *Star Wars* game. As *The Phantom Menace* prepared to launch, LucasArts amazed gamers by revealing that the *Naboo Starfighter,* which featured in the movie, was an unlockable extra in *Rogue Squadron.* What makes this revelation even more amazing is that the game had been on release for over six months, with no one discovering the secret, even members of Factor 5 and LucasArts were unaware of its inclusion. In this day and age of instant access a secret going undiscovered for so long is virtually unheard of.

## MORE GREAT STAR WARS UNLOCKABLES

### SKATE AS DARTH MAUL



■ The antagonist of *The Phantom Menace* turns up in *Pro Skater 3* as a character. Aside from looking cool on a skateboard he can also utilise a Force Grab as a special move.

### PLAY THE ARCADE STAR WARS TRILOGY




■ Although *Rebel Strike* was a weak ending to the *Rogue Squadron* series, it should be commended for its co-op campaign and inclusion of Atari's three classic arcade games.

### HAN SOLO THE MERCENARY



■ Fans of *Mercenaries: Playground Of Destruction* might not be aware that the popular scoundrel is hidden in the game. He's only a skin, as opposed to having any unique skills, but it's still cool to blow up the world as Han Solo.

# HOW LUCASARTS' FIRST FPS IMPROVED ON DOOM




## Star Wars: Dark Forces 1995

6 It may not have featured usable lightsabers, but there was otherwise very little wrong with LucasArts' first *Star Wars* FPS. It has a genuinely entertaining story that focuses on newcomer Kyle Katarn, it fits nicely into the *Star Wars* canon (it opens with you retrieving the Death Star plans that are mentioned in the trilogy) and it looks absolutely incredibly. Oh, and it introduced the Dark Trooper, an amazingly cool armoured flying stormtrooper that featured heavily in *Dark Forces*' plot. Notably, though, it's one of those rare first-person shooters that actually improved on id Software's classic *Doom*, introducing a number of previously unseen mechanics to the genre…

### JUMPING

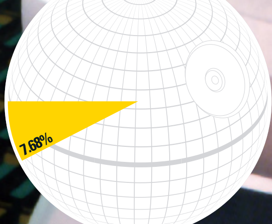
■ You couldn't jump and crouch in *Doom* but you could in *Dark Forces*. It comes into play early, due to the stages of *Dark Forces* feeling a lot more three-dimensional than they do in *Doom*.

### AWARENESS

■ The ability to look up and down in first-person shooters is commonplace nowadays, but it was rather new in 1995. It might not sound a big deal, but Kyle's ability to better survey later levels made it easier to work out where you were supposed to go.

### USEFUL ITEMS

■ *Doom* had an amazing array of weapons, but *Dark Forces* added a range of useful items from ice cleats to headlamps, which further entrench you in LucasArts' atmospheric world.




# THE CAMPAIGNS THAT DEFINED A CLASSIC SPACE SIM




### CINEMATIC CUTSCENES

■ They may not have been brilliantly animated, but simply being able to follow a genuinely entertaining story ensured that *Dark Forces* had far more substance than *Doom*'s space marine killing demons plot.



### KYLE KATARN

■ He might be great at killing demons, but there's little personality to Doomguy. Kyle Katarn feels far more fleshed out, meaning you become more attached to him as play progresses.









## 5 Star Wars: TIE Fighter 1994

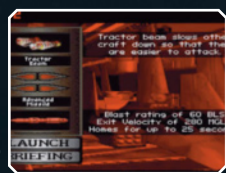
### AFTERMATH OF HOTH

■ The first tour campaign sets the tone of *TIE Fighter* perfectly, immediately indicating the greatness that is to come. Although it starts of as just another standard inspection, you soon find yourself embroiled in a tense fight with Mugari pirates and various rebel ships, including dangerous X-wing fighters. As good as the original *X-Wing* was, there's something strangely satisfying about being in the far nippier imperial ships and the sheer variety of the first campaign keeps you constantly entertained.



### NEW THREATS

■ Okay so New Threats is technically from the excellent expansion pack *Defender Of The Empire*, but it's so tense it just needs to be included. The expansion's final Tour Of Duty is full of variety, including saving a VIP scientist, patrolling a damaged cruiser, facing off against pirates piloting TIE defenders and it culminates in a fraught assault on a secret TIE defender factory. It's also memorable for introducing the ridiculously powerful Missile Boat, an incredibly advanced prototype star fighter.



### TREACHERY AT OTTEGA

■ The last Tour Of Duty of *TIE Fighter* is a doozy. The well-written campaign revolves around the kidnapping of the Empires leader, Emperor Palpatine, and Darth Vader himself is overseeing the rescue attempt, which means that you get to fly alongside the fabled Dark Jedi himself. You're flying against the very best in this final set of missions, and there are scores of enemy fighters to shoot down. Luckily you're placed in command of a powerful TIE defender ship, which ensures that you have a fighting chance.



### CONFLICT AT MYLOK IV

■ You're halfway through the game and things are beginning to heat up. You've now flown most of the craft in *TIE Fighter* and are more than capable of dealing with the numerous battles the opposition throw at you. In fact, you're becoming so competent, your superiors feel it's time for you to go head-to-head with the Rebel Alliance's A-wings, X-wings and Y-wings, which will all need a variety of techniques to defeat. While the missions are rather basic the thrilling aerial dogfights more than compensate.

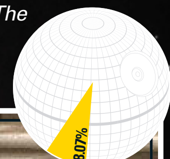


# YOUR MOST SURPRISING CHOICE

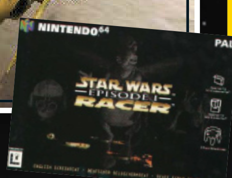
## Star Wars Episode I: Racer 1999

4 It's a massive surprise to see *Episode I Racer* so high up in your list, but it certainly deserves its position. Not to be confused with the equally excellent *Star Wars: Racer Arcade,* which was released by Sega in 2000, *Episode I: Racer* is a glorious futuristic racer from LucasArts that comes close to toppling *F-Zero GX* as the best example of the genre on Nintendo's 64-bit console.

Alongside the final lightsaber duel, the pod race is easily the highlight of *The Phantom Menace*, so it's fitting that LucasArts did everything it could to match the excitement that the original cinematic sequence offered. There are a large number of ships and courses to unlock and an excellent two-player mode (although the PC version could support up to eight via a local network). Graphically it's superb, particularly the N64 version which benefits from the Expansion Pack to increase the game's textures. There was also an exclusive bundle on N64, which is slowly rising in value. The Dreamcast and PC versions are better due to being on more powerful hardware, but as many of you mentioned Nintendo's version by name it's the one we've decided to focus on.






# THE CHARACTERS THAT SHAPED THE HIT RPG




## 3 Star Wars: Knights Of The Old Republic 2003






### BASTILA SHAN

■ Bastila joins your party after you save her from the Black Vulkars. While she's a proficient Jedi, she's also impulsive, vain and occasionally questions her actions.



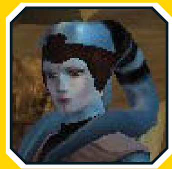
### CARTH ONASI

■ Carth escapes with you at the beginning of the game. He's reluctant to talk about his past and quick to question anything you want to do. Basically, he's a pain in the arse.



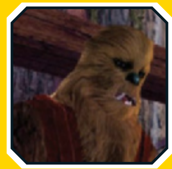
### CANDEROUS ORDO

■ Due to following the Mandalorian code, this jaded war veteran is often a cause of friction in the group. He's honourable, though, and great in a fight.



### MISSION VAO

■ Mission is cocky and impulsive, exactly what you'd expect from a teenager. She always sees the best in people and can be annoyingly optimistic at times.



### ZAALBAR

■ This Wookie doesn't go anywhere without Mission and is her loyal companion. He's also the son of a Wookie Chieftain and was banished from his clan.



### JOLEE BINDO

■ This old Jedi has had a difficult past and has been in hiding for 20 years. You eventually discover his backstory and why he's considered a Grey Jedi.

> "Juhani is considered one of the most pointless characters in the game"



### JUHANI

■ Juhani's tragic background has made her volatile and a follower of the Dark Side. She's largely considered one of the most pointless characters in the game.



### HK-47

■ This dangerous assassin droid has lost most of its memory when you first met it. It is also incredibly sarcastic, but its skill in battle means you might not want to cross it.



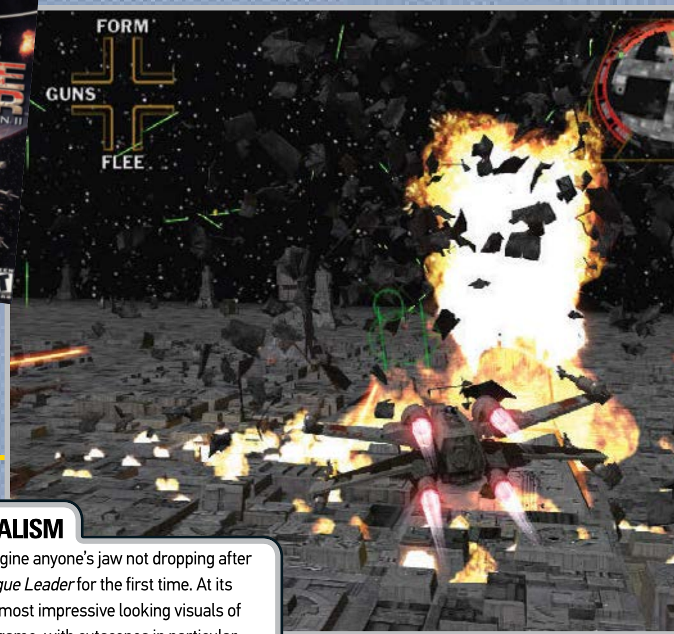
### T3-M4

■ While it's not incredible in a fight T3-M4 is a master Slicer that makes it handy at hacking into things. You won't take it on too many missions with you, though.

# WHY ROGUE LEADER IS THE BEST STAR WARS GAME ON CONSOLES

## 2 Star Wars Rogue Leader: Rogue Squadron II 2001




### BATTLE OF HOTH

■ We've played countless *Star Wars* games where we jumped into a Snowspeeder and battled the AT-ATs of Hoth, but *Rogue Leader* elevated the classic cinematic scene to a whole new level. Harpooning AT-ATs is more satisfying than it's ever been in previous games, while the amount of control you have over your wingmen makes you really feel like you're taking the fight to the Imperials.

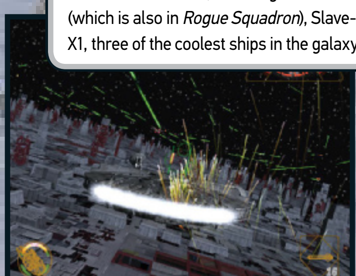
### HYPER REALISM

■ We can't imagine anyone's jaw not dropping after witnessing *Rogue Leader* for the first time. At its time it had the most impressive looking visuals of any *Star Wars* game, with cutscenes in particular having an almost movie-like effect to them. It remains an incredibly beautiful looking game, thanks to its stunning replications of classic ships, meaty explosions and authentic lighting.



### AWESOME SHIPS

■ Like *Rogue Squadron*, *Rogue Leade*r gave you some excellent ships to fly, including X-wing, Y-wings and A-wings. Each ship handles differently to the others and are used for various missions, ensuring a good mix of balance during play. It also boasts some superb unlockable craft too, including the Millennium Falcon (which is also in *Rogue Squadron*), Slave-I and the TIE X1, three of the coolest ships in the galaxy.



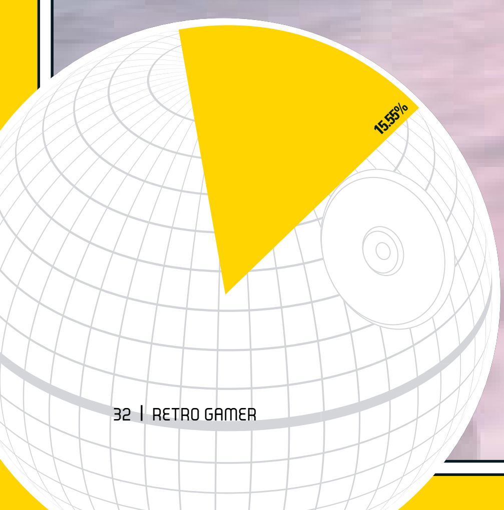
### ENTER DENIS LAWSON

■ Fans of the *Rogue Squadron* novels will know what an important role Wedge Antilles plays in them, so it's rather awesome that Factor 5 and LucasArts were able to secure original actor Denis Lawson to reprise his role from the earlier films. He adds a level of gravitas to the game that was missing from the original *Rogue Squadron*, further enhancing the already brilliant atmosphere of Factor 5's game.

### AMAZING BONUSES STAGES

■ *Rogue Squadron* had three solid unlockable stages, but the five found in *Rogue Leader* are even better. Death Star Escape replicates the group's thrilling escape from the Death Star in *Star Wars*, while The Asteroid Field mimics one of *The Empire Strikes Back*'s most thrilling scenes. Triumph Of The Empire lets you play as Vader in his TIE Advanced x1, while Revenge On Yavin has Vader launching a retribution strike on the Rebel base. Last but by no means least is the gruelling Death Star Endurance that requires you to survive ten waves of dangerous Imperial fighters.

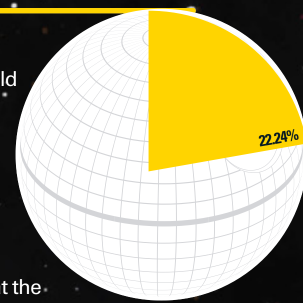





# THE FORCE IS STRONG IN THIS ONE

## Star Wars 1983




1 It's hard to imagine that anything else could have topped this list. It's not because the other games aren't good enough – the other *Star Wars* games on this list, and many that didn't make the cut, are fine pieces of software. However, they don't have the benefit that Atari's *Star Wars* had, because they came out at the wrong time. Atari struck when the iron was hot with *Star Wars*, releasing the arcade game right around the time that the film trilogy was concluding with *Return Of The Jedi*. The new film had whipped fans into a frenzy and players simply couldn't wait to take control of the action for themselves. The other games were bought to recapture the *Star Wars* magic – you pumped coins into this one while the love affair was still in full swing.

You could play other arcade games that let you fly a spaceship through a trench. Some of them were even very good but they just weren't *Star Wars*. They didn't have Obi-Wan Kenobi telling you to use the force. You didn't see the Death Star on the horizon. In *Zaxxon*, you watched from the outside as your ship passed under enemy fire and over obstacles. In *Star Wars*, thanks to the 3D vector visuals, you were in the cockpit, adrenaline rushed as you screamed towards the Empire's greatest weapon.

The game design was excellent, the distinctive control yoke was ideal and the music was spot on, but the key factor in *Star Wars* was wish fulfilment. When every kid in the Western world wanted to be Luke Skywalker, this was the best way to do it. All you needed to do was pop in your coin, take your seat in the cockpit and within minutes you could be blowing up the Death Star.

And to us, that's the greatest legacy of Atari's *Star Wars* – it got the most important thing right at the first attempt. Put simply, the Death Star trench run was flawless. All manner of *Star Wars* games have revisited the scene since, but from Sega's arcade efforts to the likes of *Super Star Wars* and *Rogue Leader*, not one has memorably deviated from the template that Atari laid down in the Eighties. Why would they? You don't mess with perfection.

> **"The game design was excellent, the distinctive control yoke was ideal"**

## THESE ARE NOT THE GAMES YOU'RE LOOKING FOR…

**We were surprised that these greats didn't force their way into your top ten**

### SUPER STAR WARS 1983

■ This SNES classic is rock hard but it's a hell of a run-and-gunner. Not only that, but it's got Mode 7 sections featuring the landspeeder and the X-wing and the iconic Death Star trench run.



### STAR WARS TRILOGY ARCADE 1998

■ Sega's second stab at the *Star Wars* licence was impossible to avoid in late-Nineties arcades, and with good reason – the game was undeniably excellent.



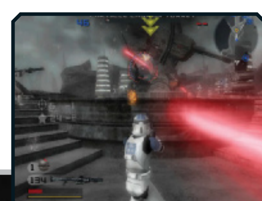
### STAR WARS GALAXIES 2003

■ While the game never reached a lofty player base, there's still a lot of fondness for the first *Star Wars* MMORPG – to the point that players are actively trying to revive it.



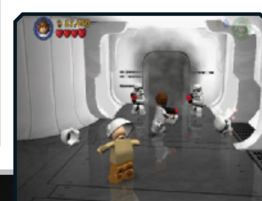
### STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT II 2005

■ This team shoot-'em-up was awesome a decade ago, and age hasn't dulled it a bit. Whether your playing as a Sith Lord or a Rebel sniper, you'll have tons of fun.



### LEGO STAR WARS II: THE ORIGINAL TRILOGY 2006

■ It's the newest game on the list and looks like it's exclusively for kids, but this platform adventure has plenty to offer fans. Its only true weakness is its easy difficulty.



# Hardware Heaven




## Lynx

» **MANUFACTURER:** Atari Games » **YEAR:** 1989
» **COST:** £199 (£30+ now)

It's easy to see why Atari thought the Lynx was going to steamroll Nintendo's Game Boy. It was not only ridiculously powerful compared to Nintendo's rival handheld, it also boasted full colour graphics, a selection of truly stunning arcade conversions and all sorts of cool innovations that ranged from a backlit display to rotating the system 90° for vertical games and even the option to flip the control scheme so you can play it left or right-handed. In short it was a powerful, funky bit of kit that should have been the most desirable gadget of 1989.

History painted a different picture, however, and we now know that the Lynx lost out spectacularly to the Game Boy, and eventually came in third, behind Sega's Game Gear, which had launched several months later in 1990. Atari may have had sheer grunt on its side, but a lack of varied games, limited battery life and steep price drop simply couldn't save it, even when Atari redesigned it. Atari's console bowed out of the market with around 3 million units sold, but has gone on to become a great console to collect for due to its small library of games that include many impressive arcade conversions.*




## Hardware fact

■ The Lynx was created by Epyx and was known as the Handy during development. It was pitched to Nintendo, which revealed that it was working on its own hystem, the Game Boy. Needless to say Nintendo's console won out.




**RAM:** 64 KB 120NS DRAM

**PROCESSOR:** MOS 65SC02

**FORMAT:** CARD

**TOTAL SOLD:** 3 MILLION

## ESSENTIAL GAME

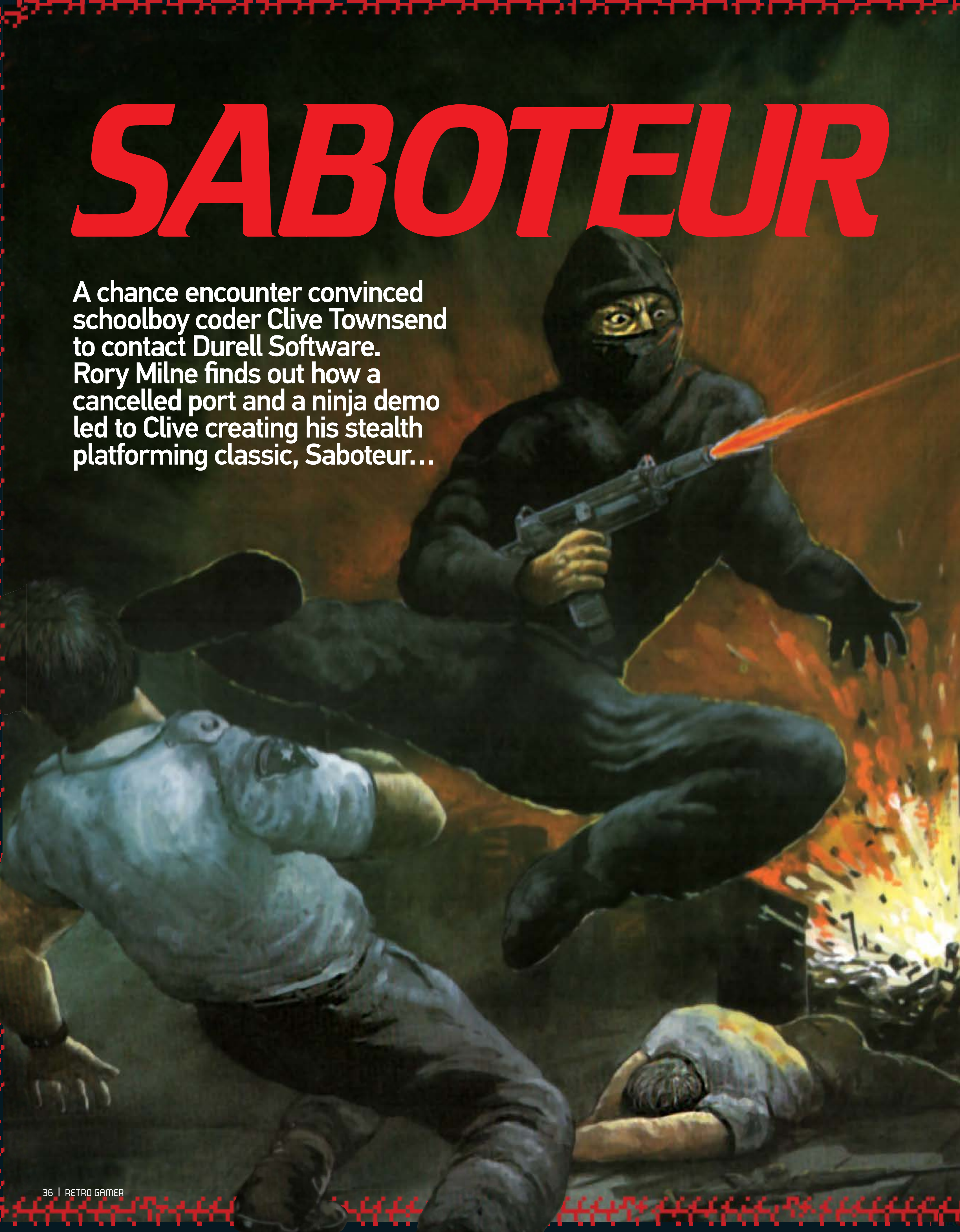



### S.T.U.N. Runner

The Lynx was an incredibly powerful little machine, and no game proved it more than the excellent *S.T.U.N. Runner*. Coded by D Scott Williamson, it's an astonishing port that captures all the thrills and spills of the original coin-op. The level design, digitised speech, gut-churning tunnels – it's all there and runs and an insanely fast pace. Yes it's light on substance, being a simple tunnel racer, but what it loses in bells and whistles it makes up for in sheer playability. It not only highlights the Lynx's impressive hardware specs, but also shows just what was possible in talented hands.

# SABOTEUR

**A chance encounter convinced schoolboy coder Clive Townsend to contact Durell Software. Rory Milne finds out how a cancelled port and a ninja demo led to Clive creating his stealth platforming classic, Saboteur…**



**The UK home computer scene of the early-Eighties was synonymous with bedroom coders, many of who dreamt of replicating** the games they played in amusement arcades on the systems they had in their homes and of ultimately getting their work published. Of course, the reality was seldom this simple, as a teenager Clive Townsend found out when he met Durell Software boss Robert White. "My original plan was to sell some of my homemade games in a local computer shop. While the shop said they would sell my games, they pointed out that Taunton had a real software house just down the road. A real stroke of luck, as from the outside the Durell offices didn't attract much attention and they weren't actively advertising for new staff. So I arranged a meeting with Robert White and showed him my games. One of [them], called *Citadel*, was a spaceship-based arcade game with three stages – similar to *Space Invaders*, *Missile Command* and *Scramble*. Robert liked the games, but suggested I learn assembler instead of using compiled BASIC. He also showed me Durell's latest game, *Jungle Trouble*, and challenged me to break the copy protection system. That seemed to impress him enough to let me visit the offices during school holidays, which turned into a job offer when I left school."

Despite having a foot in Durell's door, on leaving school, parental pressure persuaded the young coder to turn down Robert White's offer and continue his formal education, although this proved to be a short-lived resolution. "My dad wanted me to go to college so I did – although my teachers thought I was weird for studying maths, physics and art. I was told that I'd never find a job that needed that combination of skills… Well after a year at college, I realised that I was missing out on real experience and asked Robert if the job offer was still on. It was, and I left college to work for Durell. I didn't actually make the tea – that was a joke by one of the *Crash* reviewers – but I did start off on a very low wage as I was still learning assembly. My first project was a game called *Death Pit* for the Spectrum, which was also being developed by two other in-house programmers for the Amstrad and BBC Micro."

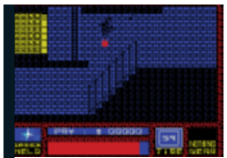
Like his earlier coin-op clones, Clive's Spectrum *Death Pit* was destined not to be published, although the experience he gained from these projects would be applied to a promising demo with the code-name *Saboteur*. "My version of *Death Pit* was virtually complete on the Spectrum but didn't really seem as 'classy' as Durell's other products. Mike Richardson's games all had a certain polish that was hard to compete with. The BBC version was also canned, and the Amstrad version was re-written from scratch by Simon Francis. At least my loading screen was used for the Amstrad version! As I started on *Saboteur* while working on *Death Pit* there were definitely similarities in the way the code was written. The *Death Pit* code wasn't actually copied, but I certainly learned some techniques from it, such as building up layers of graphics off-screen to avoid visible flicker."

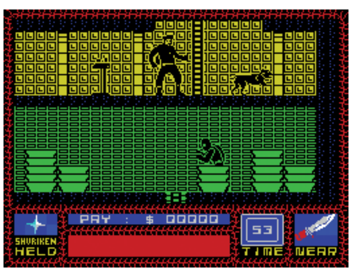
**Clive's *Saboteur* demo was informed by a passion for the martial arts, a certain cinematic super-spy and** above all ninjas – and this last influence would later shape the levels and loading screen of the fully-fledged game that would evolve from the young designer's proof of concept. "The Eighties saw a huge explosion in ninja films and I was a big fan. To this day, I still have a load of them on VHS. When my girlfriend and I bought two black cats I named mine Jotaro after the protagonist in *The Ninja Wars*. When I started on *Saboteur*, I really didn't know what the whole game would look like – I just let it evolve as I had ideas. But many of the ideas came from ninja films, *James Bond*, and an interest in spies and martial arts. It was only ▶

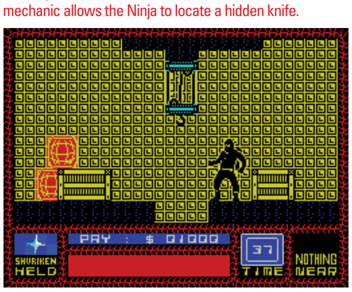


» [ZX Spectrum] *Saboteur*'s Ninja scales the docks of an enemy stronghold having arrived by dinghy at night.

**"There was no conscious decision to avoid violence, but I did want the ninja to use skill; otherwise I would have given him a gun"**
Clive Townsend

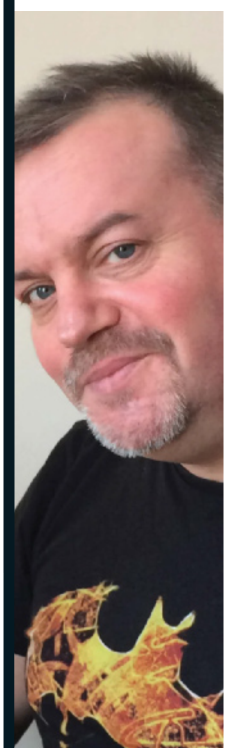


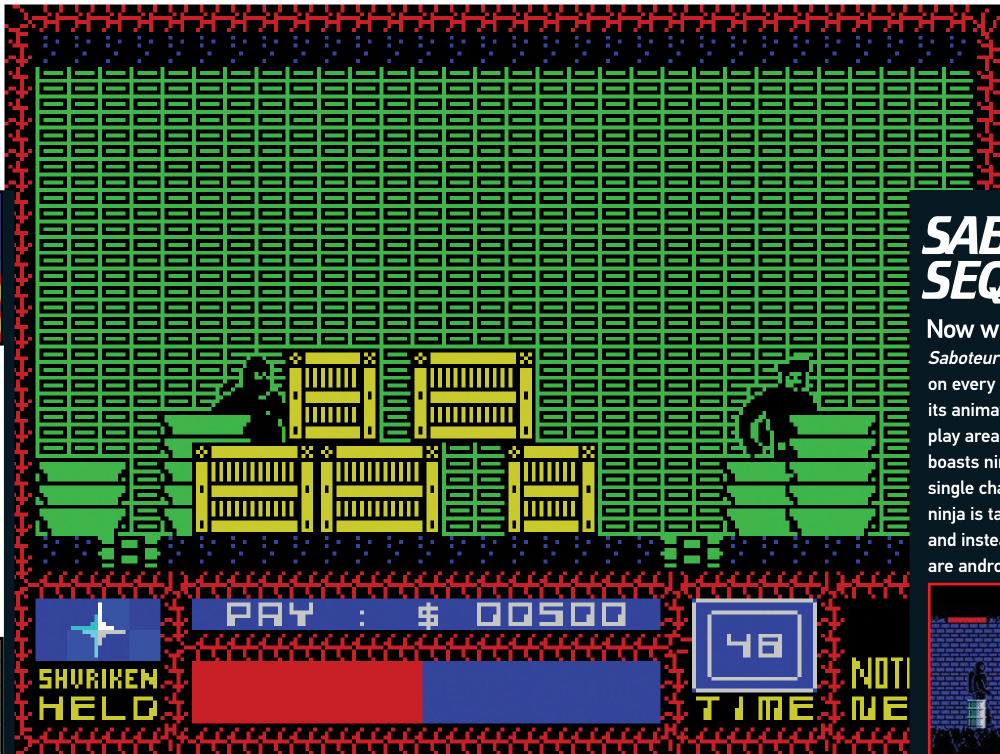

» [ZX Spectrum] *Saboteur*'s 'NEAR' item detection mechanic allows the Ninja to locate a hidden knife.


» [ZX Spectrum] Failing to clear this gap wouldn't cost the Ninja energy, but it would waste precious time.

## SABOTEUR 101

■ A platformer that demands fighting, problem solving and stealth manoeuvres, *Saboteur* sets the task of guiding a ninja through an enemy base, finding a disk, planting a bomb and then escaping by helicopter. Enemy soldiers, computer-controlled doors and motion-guided lasers make the mission even harder.


» Clive is currently focused on his *Saboteur* update but might remake *Saboteur 2* next.




» [ZX Spectrum] The stealthy Ninja silently approaches an enemy soldier he plans to take out from behind.




## IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:** Durell
» **DEVELOPER:** Clive Townsend
» **RELEASED:** 1985
» **PLATFORM:** Various
» **PLATFORM:** Platformer / Beat-'em-up

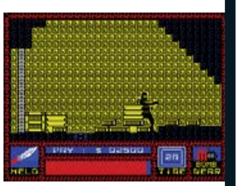


## DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

**SABOTEUR**
**SYSTEM:** Spectrum
**YEAR:** 1985

**SABOTEUR II**
**SYSTEM:** Spectrum
**YEAR:** 1987

**HOT POTATO!** (PICTURED)
**SYSTEM:** Game Boy Advance
**YEAR:** 2001



▶ recently that I realised that Eric Van Lustbader's book, *The Ninja*, had influenced *Saboteur*'s map design. In the book there's a fight on the top-floor of an almost-finished skyscraper. That must have subconsciously influenced my level design for the girders and stanchions at the top of the *Saboteur* building. And I can't remember exactly how it happened, but you may notice that the loading screen was 'inspired by' one of the Cannon ninja films…"

Long before even considering levels or a loading screen, though, Clive had the small matter of working out how to make his ninja demo scroll smoothly. The solution came when Robert White suggested making *Saboteur* a flick-screen title, which subsequently provided Clive with several bonuses and just one glitch to work around. "My original demo had a full-screen colour scrolling background, but wasn't smooth enough to be playable. Even scrolling eight pixels at a time to avoid colour clash didn't solve the problem. Robert's excellent idea instantly solved this – and had hidden benefits, which I didn't realise until further on in the development process. There was only ever *one* guard in the whole game. As you switched screen I effectively 'paged' the guard's animation data in and out. Although the AI code for the guard was fairly basic, this made it much more efficient. And there was only one dog too. I used the same process with the dog's data but didn't have room to store the direction flag. If you killed a dog you might come back later to find it facing the opposite way. I'm sure I could have freed up a few bits somewhere, but instead chose to re-draw the dead dog into a symmetrical pose. This hid the problem but also gave the dog a very undignified splatted look!"

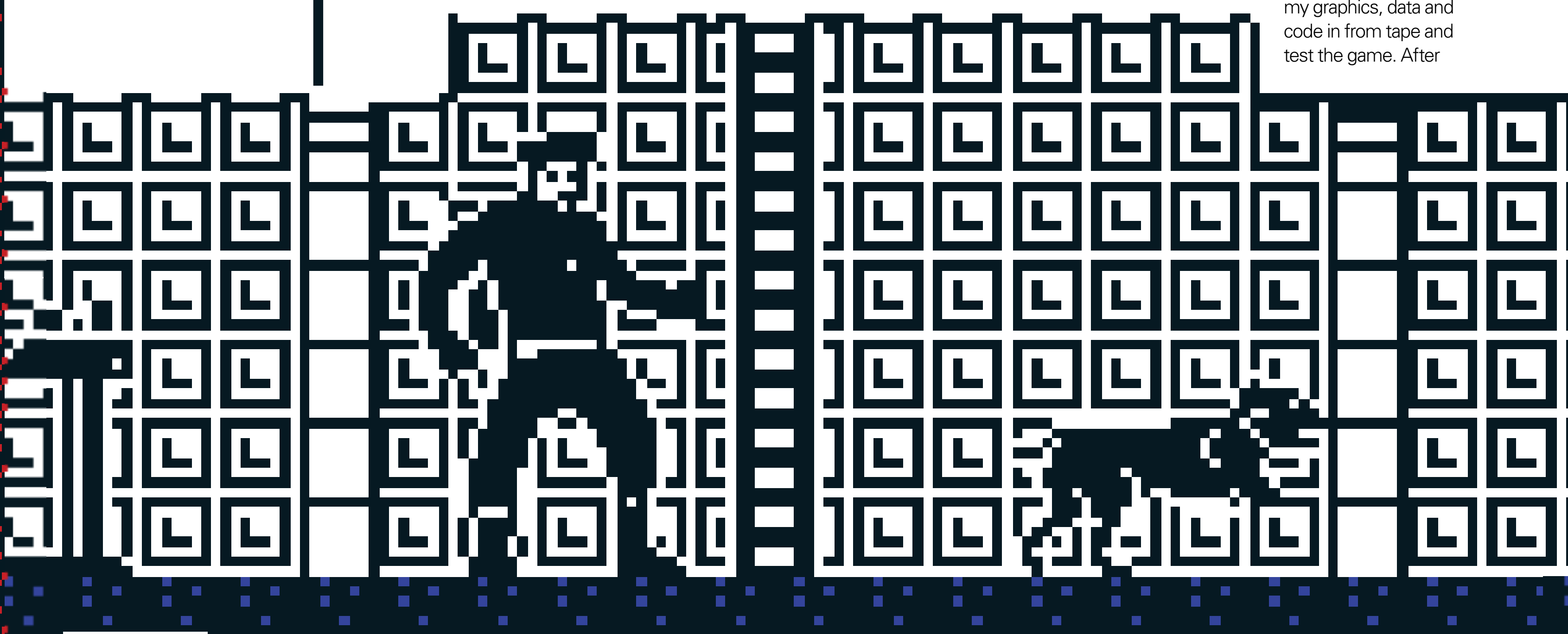
**Although with Robert's help Clive's *Saboteur* had transitioned from demo to full-blown project, the** youthful developer was still expected to write his game alone and with the most basic of coding set-ups. "Games in those days were much smaller than modern games so could be developed almost single-handedly, and *Saboteur* was created on an actual Spectrum. I'd load in my Zeus assembler and a piece of source code, assemble it, and save the object code to tape. Then I'd load all my graphics, data and code in from tape and test the game. After

## SABOTEUR'S SEQUEL

### Now with more missions!

***Saboteur II: Avenging Angel*** **improves on every aspect of the original game; its animation is much more fluid, its play area is more expansive and it boasts nine missions to *Saboteur*'s single challenge. *Saboteur II*'s female ninja is tasked with far more collecting, and instead of guards and dogs her foes are androids and pumas!**





noting down any problems or bugs I'd then re-load my assembler and some source again. It was a very long-winded approach, which meant firstly that the game took longer to develop, but ultimately meant that I didn't have the complete source code all in one place. This prevented me from making the code as neat as it could have been – with a better development system I could have added a lot more to the game."

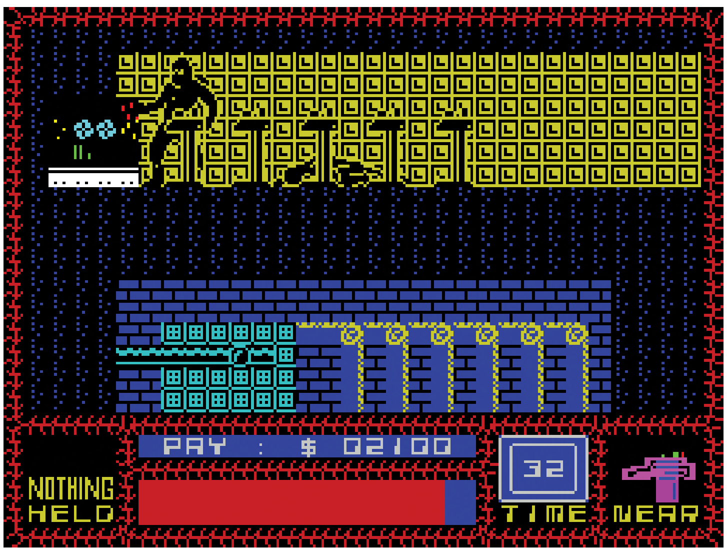
The tools available for creating *Saboteur*'s graphics were just as rudimentary, and so Clive found himself drawing his game's heroic ninja, ruthless foes and sprawling levels on graph paper and translating their designs into hexadecimal values. "[It was] squared paper and hex values all the way! The ninja animations were just drawn by hand, but the dog animation frames were based on tracings from one of Eadweard Muybridge's books showing still photos of animals as they moved. He was a pioneer in the world of photography and created images that helped me out over 100 years later!"

When it came to gauging *Saboteur*'s gameplay, Clive favoured skill over mindless violence, and perhaps taking his lead from Eadweard Muybridge developed a pioneering stealth mechanic for his game. "There was no conscious decision to avoid violence – most of the ninja films I was watching were a lot more violent! But I did want the ninja to be able to use skill instead of just brute force; otherwise I would have given him a gun. The code for sneaking up on guards was incredibly simple. If you were on your fourth running frame I made sure the guard was facing you. To this day, I'm amazed that a tiny bit of code had a dramatic effect on the gameplay and helped to usher in the sneak-'em-up genre!"

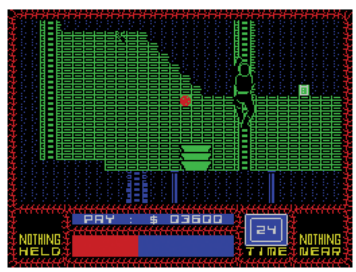
**In keeping with his emphasis on skilful gameplay, Clive armed his ninja with just a single shuriken and only** limited opportunity to collect additional weapons leaving the warrior to rely largely on unarmed martial arts combat, although the designer toned down an early thought of even more restrictive weaponry usage. "One of the ideas I toyed with was to have metal detectors in certain parts of the building so you weren't able to carry metal items in some areas. I thought maybe that you'd start with nothing and have to find everything within the building, but it didn't feel very nice to start unarmed. The metal detector idea never really happened, although carrying a single item was already working so it ended up stayed in."

Clive's idea of having his ninja begin with only a single shuriken soon evolved into a restriction on his hero carrying just one item at a time of any sort. The developer also added a complimentary mechanic to display hidden weaponry and items when walked past in a 'NEAR' box at the foot of the screen. "I hadn't played any similar games so I didn't have anything to compare with, but it seemed the obvious way for the gameplay mechanic to work. It also kept things simple – you didn't have to cycle through a load of inventory to find the item you needed. I had originally planed to have a wider variety of items and use them to create more puzzles, but as memory dwindled the extra items – and the puzzles – were sadly left out."

An equally brilliant mechanic followed as Clive devised an energy bar that recharged when his ninja rested – albeit at the cost of losing precious seconds of mission time. "I did experiment with lives at one point, but it detracted from the realism. Having an energy bar gave me more precision when inflicting ▶



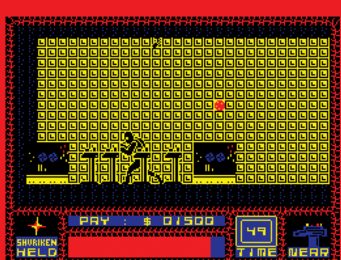

» [ZX Spectrum] Having dispatched a guard, the Ninja sets about hacking a computer that controls an exit.




» [ZX Spectrum] A laser weapon firing into a tight spot provides a test of the Ninja's timing and agility.

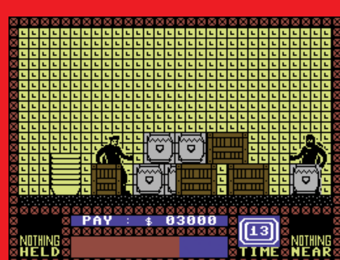
## CONVERSION CAPERS

How the other versions of Saboteur stack up



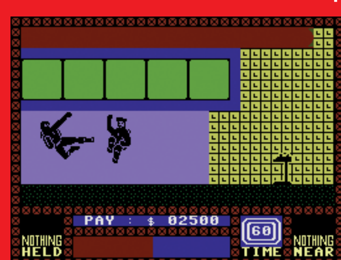
### AMSTRAD CPC

■ Visually identical to the Spectrum *Saboteur*, besides sporting a more colourful weapons panel, the CPC version of *Saboteur* sounds better but has slightly slower animation and very slight but noticeable pauses between rooms. Crucially, though, the Amstrad port perfectly replicates the original's gameplay.



### COMMODORE 64

■ Apart from minor concessions to its colour palette, the C64's *Saboteur* looks very similar to the game it's emulating – and its more muted colours actually add to the game's realism. It runs a little faster, which is no bad thing, and the original's gameplay is nicely reproduced on Commodore's flagship system.



### COMMODORE PLUS/4

■ The Commodore Plus/4 boasts the fastest version of *Saboteur*, including a speedy replenishment of the game's energy bar. The Plus/4 adaptation is an accurate one, right down to its minimal sound effects. As with its C64 counterpart, the Plus/4 *Saboteur* is rendered in muted colours, which work well.



### COMMODORE 16

■ Given the C16's memory constraints, it's a miracle that any form of *Saboteur* was attempted on the machine let alone pulled off. The end result has severely stripped back graphics, smaller playfields and much-simplified gameplay. It's not a bad game by any means, but it's not a close conversion either.

## BITMAP NINJAS

More great gaming ninjas

### GOEMON



■ Based on Ishikawa Goemon, Konami's ninja debuted in *Mr Goemon*. His largely Japan-only outings also include brawlers, RPGs, a racer and a puzzler. Goemon's world is an ancient Japan with futuristic tech, which explains his domestic success.

### ARMAKUNI



■ Star of the *Last Ninja* trilogy, Armakuni's missions see him battling through isometric renditions of idyllic settings. Besides his martial arts prowess, the *Last Ninja* games test Armakuni's guile and agility with object-based puzzles and tricky platforming.

### JOE MUSASHI



■ Although Joe didn't front every *Shinobi* game he was the leading man for the majority of Sega's scrolling brawler/platformers. Joe's outings are defined by his favoured range weapon – a throwing star – but he also carries a sword in some series entries and is well-versed in ninja magic.

### STRIDER HIRYU



■ Like George Lucas did with Jedi, the design group that created Strider Hiryu took the concept of the ninja in an unreal and fantastic direction. Hiryu can pull off breathtaking acrobatics and impossible acts of agility – plus he can perform lightning-fast attacks with his sword.

**"I did experiment with lives, but it detracted from the realism. Having an energy bar gave me more precision when inflicting damage on the character"**

Clive Townsend

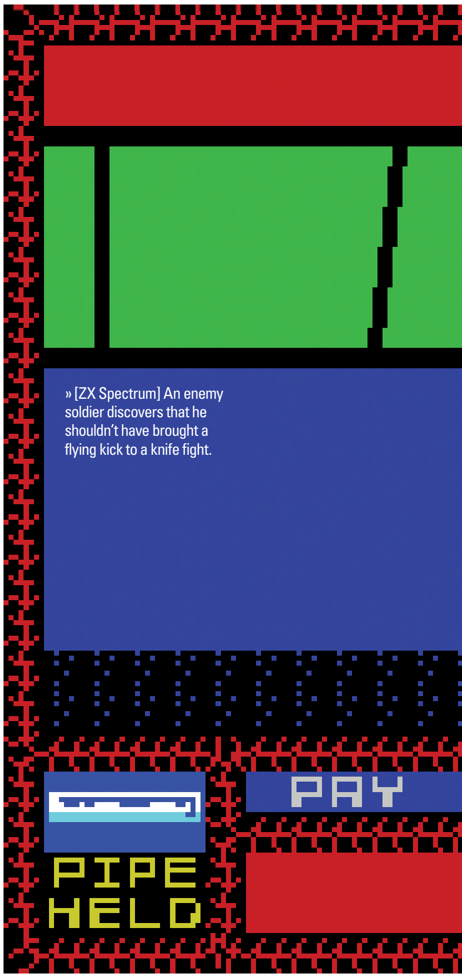
▶ damage on the character, so he could receive different damage based on how far he'd fallen, the difficulty level and so on. By having the energy bar refill when he rested, the game created a tension for the player – do they stop and rest while the clock ticks away or keep running and risk being killed by the next enemy?"

While Clive's enemy guards were certainly not to be underestimated, memory limitations did unintentionally give his game's ninja a solid defence against their assaults, but memory shortages also limited the hero to just one kick and one punch. "I'd planned to add more moves at some point, but memory was tight and other things took priority, such as background graphics and the data for the rooms themselves. In the end, I had to make the guards bodies out of the ninja body but with a different head! Ultimately, this meant that the guards didn't get a leg-sweep animation, so the ninja could just crouch down and they couldn't attack him…"

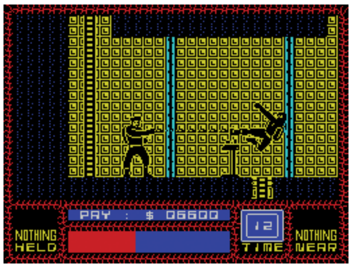
Despite memory restraints, Clive still managed to squeeze a cinematic intro and ending into his game where his ninja arrived pre-game by dinghy under cover of darkness and escaped by helicopter on completion of his mission. "I think every game should have a beginning and an end. Having been disappointed by games like *Adventure* just saying 'Game Over' when completed, I wanted to have something memorable at the end. The initial dinghy scene was just an extension to starting at the pier, and enabled me to have an 'intro' at the expense of only a few bytes of extra graphics."

**As well as rounding off *Saboteur* aesthetically, Clive also fine-tuned the challenge posed** by his game based on feedback, which resulted in the option of playing *Saboteur* at nine different difficulty levels. "Playtesting wasn't as rigorous in those days, but I did ask some of my friends, Matt and Rich, to play the game and tweaked the difficulty based on their feedback. Once I'd figured out the timings for the hardest difficulty level it was then simple to create the easier levels. The whole process was quite organic. I've heard of sculptors describing their job as chipping away all the unwanted bits of stone to reveal the statue inside. It was a bit like that really. Once you knew your way around the map you could complete the game in a few minutes, so the whole gaming experience involved learning your way around and possibly mapping the game yourself. If you got the disk, then killed all the guards, then planted the bomb and escaped you received the maximum score. One thing I should have done was add a time bonus when you completed the game, so that there was more of a reason to re-play the levels and compare your route with other players."

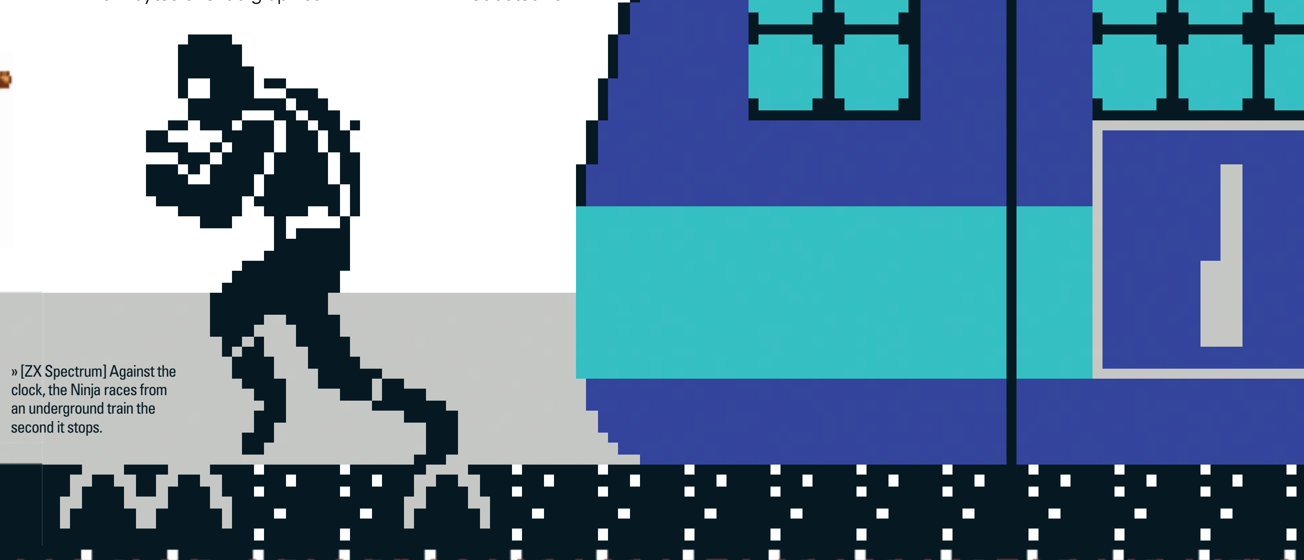
Time bonuses aside, Clive was happy with his completed game and also the response it received on its release, but it was only later that the developer began to appreciate the scale of *Saboteur*'s



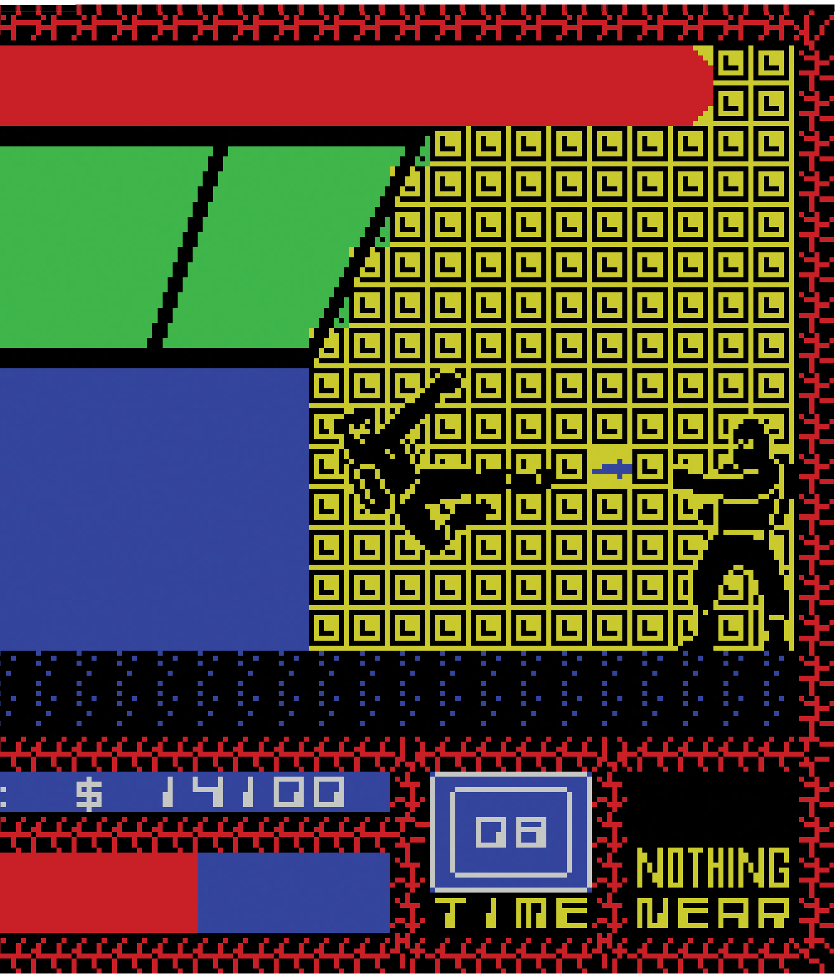

» [ZX Spectrum] An enemy soldier discovers that he shouldn't have brought a flying kick to a knife fight.




» [ZX Spectrum] A misjudged decision sees the Ninja leap into gunfire when he should have ducked.



» [ZX Spectrum] Against the clock, the Ninja races from an underground train the second it stops.



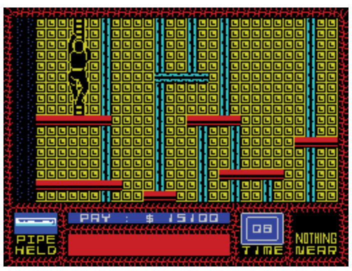

success. "The response from both the magazines and the public was awesome. *Crash* magazine awarded it 93% and their prestigious 'Crash Smash'. I was naturally very pleased, but had no idea how many copies an average game would sell, so it was difficult to know how well the game was selling. I was actually woken up one morning to be told that I would be on TV in 15 minutes, so I stumbled to the office and was interviewed by some BBC news teams. It wasn't until then that I realised how popular the game was!"

**Far from basking in glory, Clive instead set to work on converting his Spectrum hit to the Amstrad, which** proved less than straightforward due to the coding techniques he had used to create the original. "It was a nightmare! I was working entirely with the object code – not the actual source code. So I had to insert new code into the middle of old routines. Most of the game logic was the same as the Amstrad – as they're both Z80 – but several other bits had to be changed, such as drawing to the screen, checking keys and so on. The Amstrad did have more available memory so that helped – in places where the Amstrad code was bigger than the Spectrum code I could replace the original code with a jump out to the new routine, which then jumped back in when it was done…"

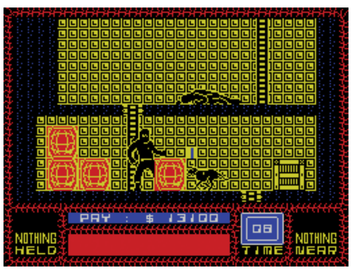
Visually faithful C64 and Plus/4 versions of *Saboteur* followed, and a stripped-back adaptation was somehow coaxed out of the memory-light C16, although Clive didn't have any direct involvement in Branko Spoljaric's Commodore conversions. "I didn't actually see the C64 version until it was done, but it used my character and background graphics so it looked very similar. My code wasn't actually used though, so they probably didn't compress the maps in the same way I did. It would have made their lives easier if I could have given them some source code to work with – but cross-platform development wasn't as organised in those days! The C16 version was brilliant – it certainly brought a smile to my face. It looked very different to all the other versions due to very limited available memory, but I applauded the skills it took to cram everything in."

Asked for his thoughts on *Saboteur* now, Clive expresses satisfaction with his game and reveals an update is imminent, which he hopes will appeal as much to the youth of today as the original did to the children of the Eighties. "Watching people of all ages playing *Saboteur* on the Spectrum at last year's revival was very satisfying. People new to the game seemed to have as much fun as those who'd played the game 30 years ago, although there were some kids who were flummoxed by the concept of pressing keys on a keyboard. This December marks the 30th anniversary of *Saboteur* being released in 1985, and I'm working on a remake, which will give them a chance to play the game on their phones and bring *Saboteur* to a whole new generation." *

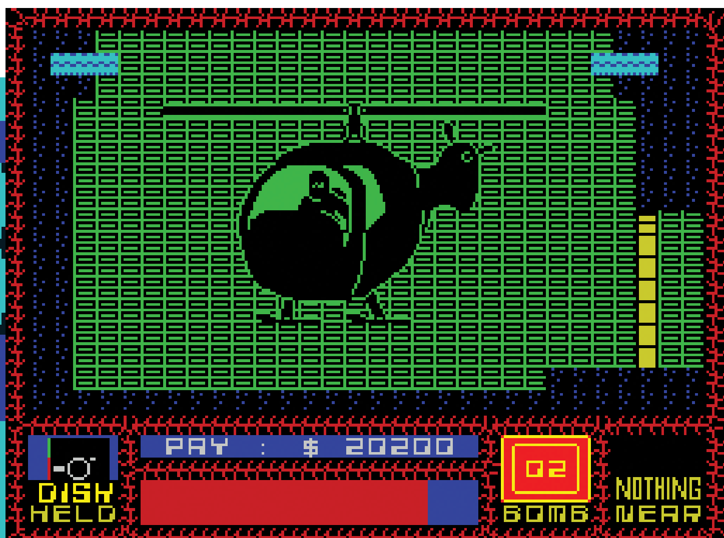
**Many thanks to Clive Townsend for sharing his memories about the creation of *Saboteur*.**




» [ZX Spectrum] Although part-brawler, part-platformer, some of *Saboteur*'s levels are strictly platforming.




» [ZX Spectrum] It's awkward to do, but a well-aimed pipe can stop a guard dog attacking the Ninja.




» [ZX Spectrum] With seconds to spare before the enemy base explodes, the Ninja takes to the air.

## SABOTEUR 2015

### Clive Townsend on his upcoming Saboteur update

"There are a few things that have bugged me [about *Saboteur*] for three decades. When you quit the game a 'SEPUKU' message comes up – spelled incorrectly with only one 'P'. Some of the drainage pipes in the underground sewers don't match up with the rooms below, and I'd planned to have water dripping from some of the pipes – the graphics are actually in the game but I never wrote the code to display them. You can also complete the game by running straight to the helicopter. You shouldn't really be told that your mission was successful as you haven't done the mission! The remake will address these issues and add more to the game, both in map size and gameplay. There are still races against time but also tests of your agility, problem-solving and yet more combat. There's more plot to reveal between the stories of *Saboteur* and *Saboteur 2* so you'll get to find out why *Saboteur 2* starts with your ninja being 'fatally wounded in his last mission'. The online version for PC and Mac will be ready in December 2015. The Android phone/tablet and Windows phone versions will probably be next, followed by the iPhone and iPad versions."

You can play the online version of Clive's update at clivetownsend.com.

CLASSIC MOMENTS

# Fantastic Dizzy

» **PLATFORM:** MASTER SYSTEM » **DEVELOPER:** CODEMASTERS » **RELEASED:** 1993

**A platforming veteran like Dizzy always needs a few extra tricks up his sleeve to deal with upstart newcomers, especially when he's facing off with them on their home turf.** Luckily, as well as a distinctive puzzle-solving style of platform adventure, Dizzy had some excellent little mini-games on hand to ramp up the variety for his first trip into console territory.

Likely the first time you'll realise this is when you take our hero out of the surprisingly big Keldor Village onto the Crystal River. Suddenly, the game switches from the standard side-on view to an overhead perspective as Dizzy jumps from a bridge into a floating barrel. As he rushes down the river back to Crystal Falls, you'll be attempting to dodge crocodiles and the rocks dropped from above by floating enemies, all while collecting stars. It's far from being the game's hardest challenge, but it's an excellent way to change things up for a moment and a hint of the variety yet to come. *



## BIO

Originally developed as an NES title, *Fantastic Dizzy* brought together elements of the intrepid egg's previous adventures to create one epic game. However, missing the Christmas 1990 sales window meant that it failed to meet commercial expectations – but that wasn't the end of the line. In 1993 the game was resurrected with improved presentation to spearhead Codemasters' charge into the Sega market, and afterwards made the journey to Amiga and PC. Despite a warm reception from press, this would be the last major *Dizzy* release until 2011's remake of *Dizzy: Prince Of The Yolkfolk.*



# MORE CLASSIC FANTASTIC DIZZY MOMENTS

## Forest Frolics



Thanks to the non-linear nature of *Fantastic Dizzy*, it's easy to wander straight from Dizzy's house to another area without discovering just how spacious the secret treetop village is. However, the home of the Yolkfolk is absolutely massive and contains a number of Dizzy's friends who need help – so you'd best get cracking and rescue them!

## Get A Life!



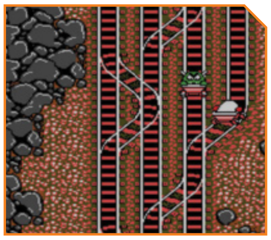
In other games, the simple act of finding an extra life icon is a cause for celebration – but in *Fantastic Dizzy*, you've got to work for your reward. Picking it up presents you with a 16-piece sliding tile puzzle, some of which are much harder than others. Get it right, though, and you'll be rewarded. Just don't fail, as you'll have wasted a pick-up.

## Walking The Plank

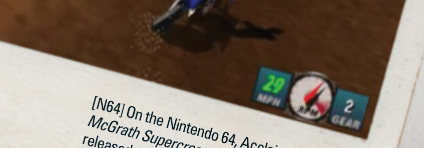


Just getting aboard Blackheart's pirate ship requires you to bribe him with rum, but apparently that's not enough – once you've explored the whole of his ship, he'll force you to walk the plank! If you want the spherical hero to survive this underwater ordeal then you'll have to ride air bubbles back up to the surface before poor old Dizzy's oxygen runs out.

## Mine, All Mine



Is a mine cart really the safest place for a fragile ovoid creature to be? Perhaps not, but Dizzy has to brave this obvious deathtrap regardless. The journey starts off nice and slow and it requires you to dodge enemies, but the track quickly branches into a variety of dead ends and the mine cart speeds up rather considerably, making this a very dangerous ride.



[N64] On the Nintendo 64, Acclaim's *Jeremy McGrath Supercross* was unfortunately released around the same time as the far-superior *Excitebike 64*.







[SNES] Pain awaits you…

# EXPOSED!

# Acclaim®

## BEHIND THE SCENES OF THE CONTROVERSIAL PUBLISHER







[NES] Early NES title, *Othello*.




[NES] The NES version of *Airwolf* differed greatly to the one from UK's Elite Systems.



[PlayStation] *Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX* was released in 2000 and well-received, despite the occasional graphical glitch.





[Game Boy] The movie was a flop and *Cutthroat Island* the game wasn't much better.

WELCOME TO THE ROLLERCOASTER RIDE KNOWN AS ACCLAIM ENTERTAINMENT. FORMED IN 1987, THE GLEN COVE PUBLISHER HAD ITS FAIR SHARE OF UPS AND DOWNS AND HITS AND FLOPS. GRAEME MASON TALKS TO SOME OF THOSE BEHIND THIS EXPANSIVE, AND OFTEN CONTROVERSIAL COMPANY...

NOTES

**We start Acclaim's story with Greg Fischbach. "I started in Washington DC as a lawyer," he tells us – we're chatting with the industry veteran via his latest venture: internet chat app, Rabb.it. "And after moving to the west coast in the mid-**Seventies, I started working at a practice in Los Angeles." Greg soon struck out on his own and began his own law firm, managing clients as varied as Richard Branson's Virgin and music legend Steve Miller (whom he also managed). Another client was Activision, and he was soon helping create development contracts for its programmers and designers, using a template similar to recording contracts. "We started getting involved a lot with [Activision] internationally," says Greg, "and one day Jim [Levy, Activision CEO] asked me to go out and find a president for Activision's international division. I came back with three really good candidates, so we sit down at dinner and he offers *me* the position – just like that! That's how I got into the videogames business."

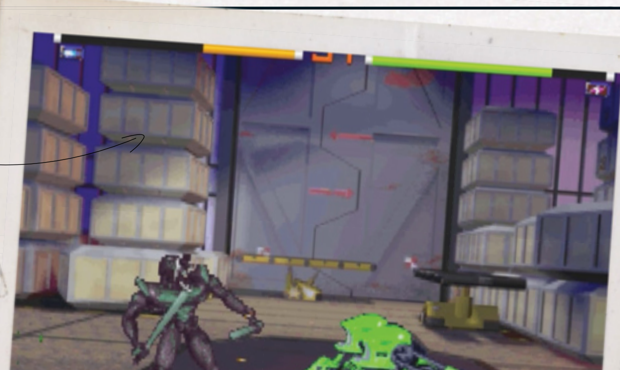
In the UK, Quicksilva and Argus Press' Rod Cousens would soon thereafter meet with the entrepreneur. "My first encounter with Greg was at Softcon, New Orleans in 1983," remembers Rod. "I was there with Quicksilva and we had a small booth where we were demonstrating *Bugaboo The Flea*." The Quicksilva stand was approached by three men from Activision who were seeking US distribution opportunities. One of them was Greg Fischbach. "From there our long-standing relationship blossomed," says Rod, "and that initial meeting led to bigger things in 1984 when I set up Electric Dreams, backed by Activision."

Leaving Activision for a brief, ill-fated period as president of international at RCA Records, Greg was ready for a new challenge. "I'd moved my family to New York for RCA so I started looking for something to do. I called up a friend who was head of sales at Activision, and he said he'd just come back from CES and proceeded to tell me that the videogames business looked like it was going to be big again." The Activision man was Jim Scoroposki. "Jimmy asked me if I could find games, and I said, 'Yes that's easy,'" smiles Greg, "as I'd spent a lot of time in Japan, licensing out Activision's catalogue." The two men formed Acclaim, its name evidently chosen to precede their former company alphabetically. "I had chosen a Japanese name for the company," reveals Greg, "but Jim said no-one will understand it, pick something else." At the time, CES was the dominant industry show, and all exhibitors were listed alphabetically in its directory. "And I wanted to be either at the beginning of the alphabet or the end, but not in the middle," Greg continues. "So we started going through names, and Acclaim sounded great, so we checked with our lawyers and took it. We honestly gave no thought as to whether the name would be before or after any of the traditional companies." Jim and Greg would become joint founders of the new company; joining them approximately three months later was another Activision alumni, Rob Holmes.

> "I WANTED TO BE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE ALPHABET OR THE END"
> GREG FISCHBACH

Acclaim's first target was to take advantage of its founders' connections and license Famicom games for the American market. Greg spent two weeks in Japan, acquiring products to sell in the US. "I was introduced to Hiro Fukami by Hayao Nakayama [founder and then-CEO of Sega] on one of my first trips to Japan as president of Activision International," he explains. "So I called Hiro when we started Acclaim and persuaded him to join us. This time it was to find titles from the Japanese publishers that we could release in America, and this strategy enabled us to enter the market just within six months." The move was mutually beneficial; at the time Nintendo was struggling to attract western publishers to support its products outside of Japan. "The Nintendo model was that you paid for the inventory before you sold it," says Greg. "It was incredibly risky, and expensive. We looked at the games, went to the companies and cut the deals. We came back and had to pick

[Saturn] Despite the first game's failure, *Rise Of The Robots* got a sequel two years later.





» Acclaim Teesside was moved into brand-new offices shortly after the takeover.

## NOTES CONT.

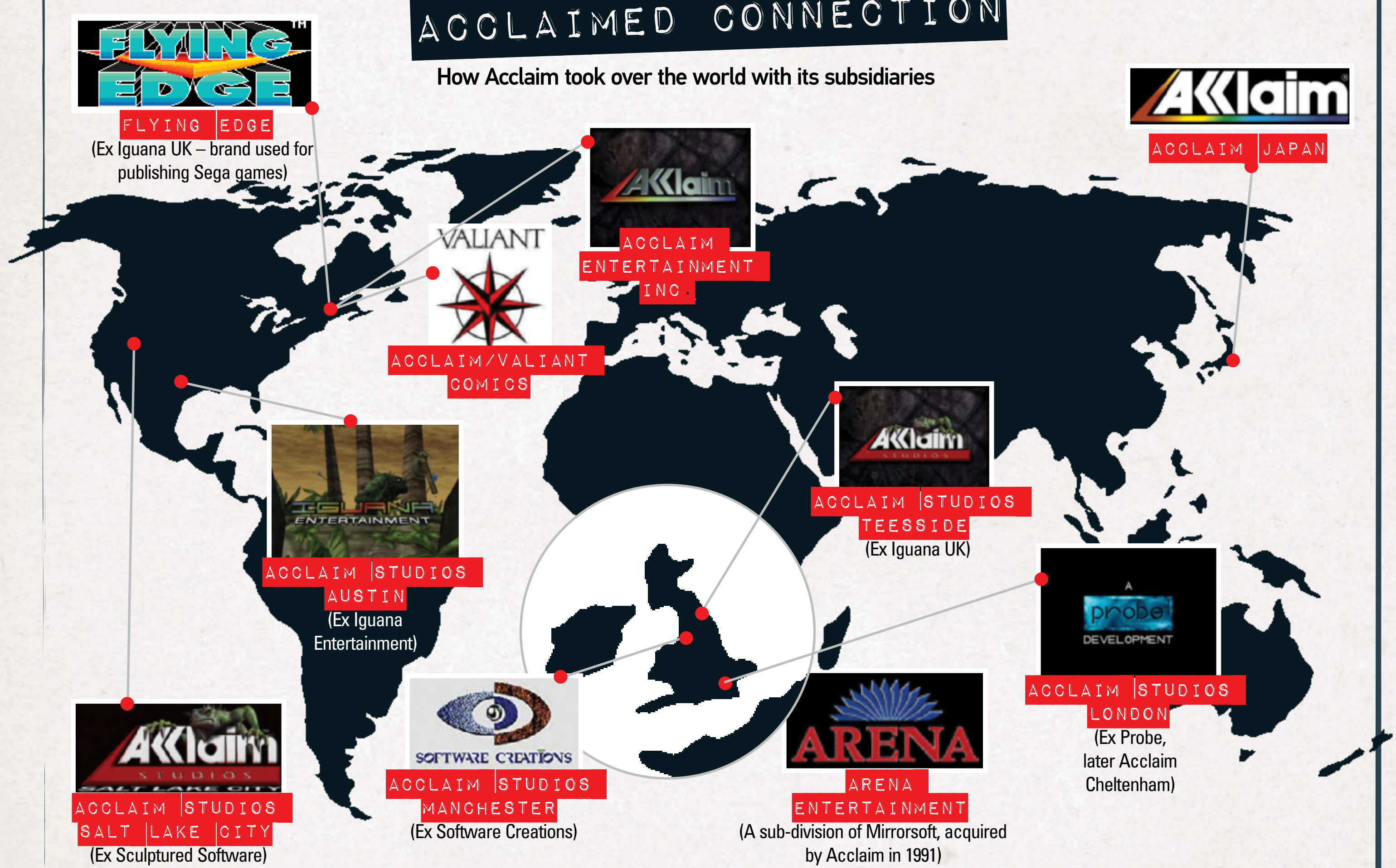
▶ four." These four included vertically-scrolling shooter *Tiger-Heli* and a space exploration game called *Star Voyager*. "They were all on the Famicom, but the big issue was where the money was going to come to support it. Jimmy and I had put in 250,000 dollars but we had no outside investment." At the last hour, an investor was found and Acclaim became four million dollars richer. "That gave us the cash to buy the inventory, and it landed in August of 1987. We shipped the games and closed the fiscal year in the same month having done 39 million dollars in business from a dead start in February." Acclaim Entertainment was up and running.

And the business snowballed. Rob Holmes and Greg went to Hong Kong and designed handheld LCD games and remote control joysticks as Acclaim expanded and quickly outgrew its modest beginnings. The company graduated from Jim Scoroposki's humble office to an entire house, purchased by Jim, and rented back to Acclaim. "There were 30-odd of us, people in the basement, upstairs, everywhere, basically sales and marketing," says Greg. "I was responsible for finding top product, mainly from Japan." Acclaim was replicating what its founders had done at Activision – making distribution deals with large companies which would yield the advances that supported the company. And thanks to Greg's contacts in Japan, there was a stream of high-quality games to publish.

Yet Greg and Jim's desired expansion was strangled due to Nintendo's restriction on individual companies and the number of games they were permitted to release. The Japanese giant allowed five 'slots' to each publisher, and once that number was reached, it was game over for the calendar year. Seeking a way around this, Acclaim purchased LJN Entertainment in 1989, a division of MCA which had begun distributing NES games around the same time, thus doubling the number of Nintendo games that Acclaim could release per year. Its five games the previous year had included two titles from UK's Rare (*Wizards And Warriors* and *WWF Wrestlemania*, the first in a long line of Acclaim wrestling games), *Rambo* and the TV licence *Knight Rider*. 1989 saw the debut of *Kwirk*, a puzzle game for the Game Boy and also star of Acclaim's own cartoon, *The Power Team*, which featured in American TV show *Video Power*. On the NES came another TV licence, *Airwolf* (which differed greatly from the UK versions published by Elite), *Wizards And Warriors* sequel, *The Iron Sword*, and a conversion of Raffaele Cecco's classic shoot-'em-up, *Cybernoid*. Following the acquisition of LJN, Acclaim in total published ten Nintendo games in 1990, greatly increasing its market presence.

## ACCLAIMED CONNECTION

**How Acclaim took over the world with its subsidiaries**






NOTES

Meantime in the UK, having been 'devastated' at Greg Fischbach's move from Activision to RCA, Rod Cousens was persuaded to remain at the company and continue his role at Electric Dreams. Rod explains: "Activision was in a state of flux. Greg and I had remained close and were liaising on his options within Europe. When Activision all but closed its operation in the UK, it was opportune to join Acclaim and set up a fledgling organisation from my home in Hampshire." Rod began work as vice president of Acclaim's UK operations and would soon be overseeing the whole of European development. "But my joining Acclaim was surrounded in such secrecy that Greg once hid me in the basement of Acclaim's offices in Oyster Bay while he conducted an interview," he laughs.

Licences and hits continued for Acclaim on a moderate to impressive scale as the Nineties gained momentum, including NES and Game Boy arcade conversions of *Double Dragon II* and *Double Dragon III*, along with a burgeoning relationship with coin-op manufacturers such as Williams and Midway. The latter provided the source material for a release that would push the publisher into the stratosphere of videogame publishers. Having already published games around the popular cartoon, *The Simpsons*, with varying degrees of success, Acclaim was about to hit a gold mine. "It was clear that titles coming out of the arcades represented a much bigger opportunity," says Greg, "as basically the audience knew about them beforehand. The home market was getting crowded and trying to stand out was getting harder." Midway's chairman, Neil Nicastro, had already struck a deal with Acclaim two years earlier for the home publication of its games. "We cut a deal, paid an advance, but got nothing that set the world alight," bemoans Greg. "So I met with him and told him the royalty rate was too high and that we were paying too much up front." The two worked out another deal at lower rates. "And within a year, we got *Mortal Kombat*," grins Greg, "and suddenly the whole thing changed." ▶




[Megadrive] *WWF Wrestlemania* wasn't the most auspicious of starts for Acclaim's wrestling license, but it got better.



A peek inside the offices of Acclaim Teesside courtesy of Trevor Storey. Hey, that looks like a Vetrex.

## LICENCE TO KILL

**Acclaim had a choppy history with licences. Here are five of its worst efforts**

### BATMAN FOREVER

■ While the arcade, Saturn and PlayStation games were decent enough brawlers (and also published by Acclaim), the Mega Drive and Super Nintendo versions were distinctly lacking in gameplay and excitement. The idea of using *Mortal Kombat*-style digitized graphics was a sound one, and the game looked nice, but it was just too slow and repetitive.



### TOTAL RECALL

■ Acclaim had a pretty solid record on the NES, so this licence of the popular Arnold Schwarzenegger movie came as a bit of a surprise. Terrible, unresponsive controls, unrelentingly poor level design and grating sound helped make a poor game. And not a three-breasted woman in sight.



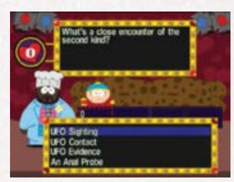
### THE ITCHY AND SCRATCHY GAME

■ Developed by Bits Corporation, this offshoot licensed game from *The Simpsons* had a troubled development, going through a number of development staff. Dodgy controls and the inevitable boredom through repetition (there's a reason the cartoons only last 30 seconds) resulted in a major clunker for Acclaim.



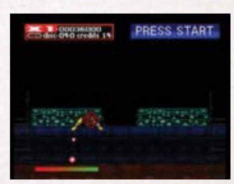
### SOUTH PARK: CHEF'S LUV SHACK (N64)

■ It was a toss-up between this sub-*Mario Party* collection of weird and rude games and another *Mario* rip-off, *South Park Rally*. *Chef's Luv Shack* wins out thanks to a tedious repetition of questions and speech. Even multiplayer – which should be the real meat of the game – becomes tiresome very quickly and the humour is schoolboy level.




### REVOLUTION X

■ Although it could be argued there's pleasure to be had from *Revolution X*, the boring nature of the gameplay is likely to test the most patient gamer. With dull graphics and an obligatory rock soundtrack (the original music was licensed from Aerosmith), it was made for the arcades, and should've stayed there.







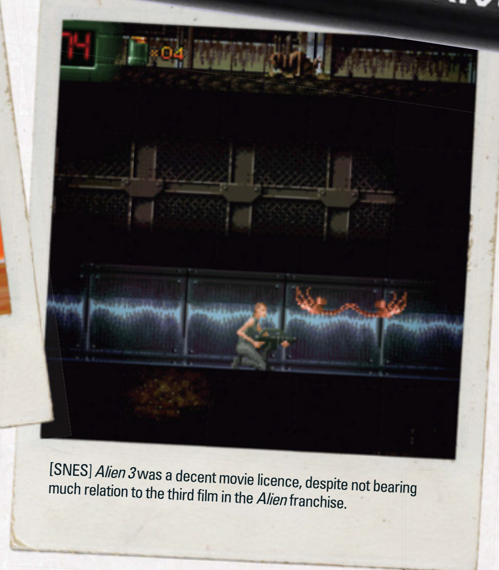




[SNES] The censored Nintendo versions of *Mortal Kombat* lacked blood and the gore of the fatality moves.



[Jaguar] Acclaim was always keen to port its games to a wide range of different formats.



[SNES] *Alien 3* was a decent movie licence, despite not bearing much relation to the third film in the *Alien* franchise.

**M*ortal Kombat* was the challenger to the *Street Fighter* one-on-one fighter crown. And not only did the Midway game steal the crown, it jammed it down the Capcom game's throat before** delivering a violent, yet gloriously entertaining, finishing move. As part of its arrangement, Acclaim would publish many of the home versions including the SNES and Sega Mega Drive. "The issue was with *Street Fighter*," remembers Greg, "as it had the better market presence. So we took *Mortal Kombat* to CES and made a big deal about it. Then we decided to spend *a lot* of money on a major advertising campaign." Greg pauses as we ask him exactly how much. A mischievous grin appears on his face. "Ten *million* dollars."

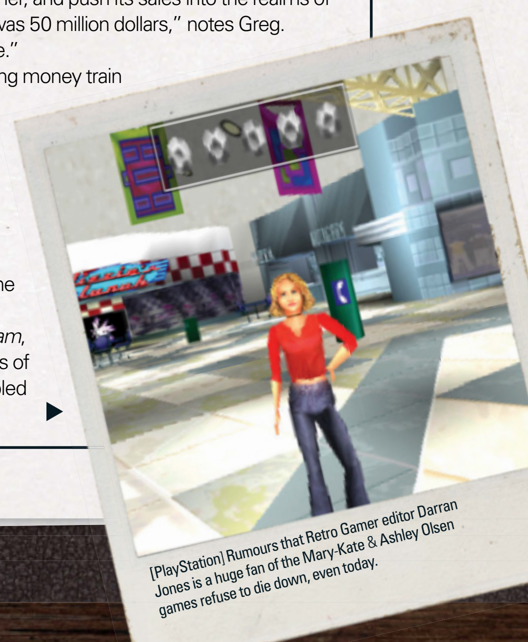
Meantime, back in Europe, Rod Cousens and colleagues were making waves too. "We had the belief and courage of our convictions," says Rod. "And we were great marketeers. We took videogames mainstream and forged collaborations with the wider entertainment industry." Deals with record labels such (Polygram) and movie studios (Columbia Tristar) funded Acclaim's expansion in Europe. "We had licensed our games for Sega machines to Mirrorsoft and when they went out of business, we got back the finished games and became the first company to publish on both competing formats. We were flying high." And, thanks to *Mortal Kombat*, Acclaim was about to go even higher. Rod continues: "The industry was growing up and the audience was widening. Videogames were going mainstream and with that, the content was becoming more graphic and controversial." The publisher revelled in the violent nature of the beat-'em-up and created an iconic advertising campaign based around its two-word title. "These adverts were going out worldwide," explains Greg, "so a lot could get lost in translation. The basis of our campaign was that the fewer words, the bigger the game's footprint could be." The result was a series of simple television spots with no spoken words other than that simple exclamation of: 'MORTAL KOMBAT!'

> "WE WERE FLYING HIGH." AND, THANKS TO MORTAL KOMBAT, ACCLAIM WAS ABOUT TO GO EVEN HIGHER"
>
> ROD COUSENS

Of course, Nintendo wasn't keen. "Howard Lincoln [Nintendo of America chairman] saw the game and just shook his head at me," recalls Greg. "First of all, they were afraid to publish it all. And then they said, you have to change the blood. So we changed the colour of the blood, but the versions that sold the most were on Sega, because people wanted the game as it was supposed to be." And in the United States, *Mortal Kombat*'s blood and violence became the start of a long chain of events that led to the creation of a self-regulatory board of videogame ratings called the ESRB – Entertainment Software Rating Board. Formed by a number of publishers, together with Nintendo and Sega, Acclaim were principally involved in the ESRB's creation, although whether this was out of a sense of responsibility for the political fallout after the *Mortal Kombat*'s release is unlikely. "I was a bad man," laughs Greg, "and I had to testify in front of congress, with everyone saying I was corrupting the nation's youth." Naturally, the front page headlines and political thrusts between Sega and Nintendo only served to publicise *Mortal Kombat* further, and push its sales into the realms of pure fantasy. "The initial ship was 50 million dollars," notes Greg. "And it just went up from there."

By now, the Acclaim licensing money train was taking in all manner of IPs. It had begun publishing wrestling games under the *WWF* banner, again with varying degrees of success; and while Greg rues missing out on the official *FIFA* license to arch-rivals Electronic Arts, the playable and best-selling two-on-two basketball sim, *NBA Jam*, more than made up for the loss of the official soccer game. Coupled to this, when cable television



[PlayStation] Rumours that Retro Gamer editor Darran Jones is a huge fan of the Mary-Kate & Ashley Olsen games refuse to die down, even today.

# HEADLINES AND DEADLINES

Seven examples where Acclaim courted controversy



EVIDENCE

## TUROK BY NAME

■ For the release of 2002's *Turok: Evolution* on the GameCube, Xbox and PS2, Acclaim challenged would-be parents to name their offspring after the famous dinosaur killer. The reward amounted to a cool $10,000 in the US, but family organisations and the press in general were horrified that a company could encourage parents to do such a thing, despite it not much dafter than naming your child after a film or sports star.



EVIDENCE

## BURNING OUT THE TICKETS

■ *Burnout 2* was a game that encouraged dangerous driving within a fictitious and harmless environment. Urging drivers to do the same in a one-day campaign that was to reward hazardous transgressions in real life was probably a step a little bit too far, even for the likes of Acclaim, and the stunt was pulled before it even happened, most likely under government pressure.




EVIDENCE

## BMXS AND BOOBIES

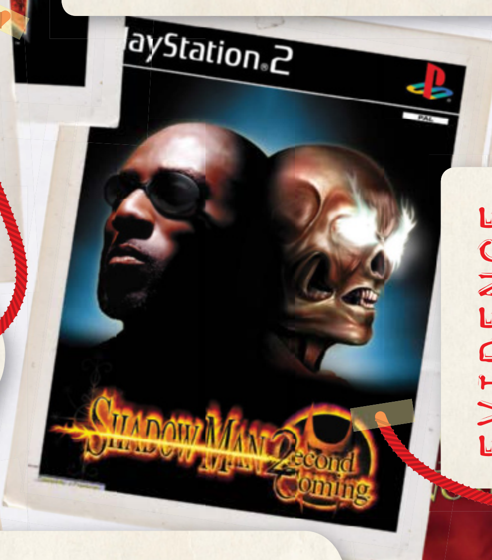
■ While the scandal made *BMX XXX* a huge talking point online, shops refused to stock it, causing it to flop badly. The game itself was a half-decent BMX simulation enshrouded in a bawdy series of video clips of half-naked women. It was even reported at the time that Dave Mirra, star of Acclaim's more serious BMX games, was suing Acclaim for using his name to promote the game.




EVIDENCE

## MORTAL KOMBAT

■ It wasn't just the violence that provoked such an outcry when *Mortal Kombat* was released into arcades and homes; it was the way that violence was depicted. Now, in full digitized glory, we had decapitations, spinal eviscerations and bucketloads of blood, all leading to the game getting mountains of press and a hearing in Congress in the US. Naturally, Acclaim milked the attention for all its worth, and the game was a massive seller.




EVIDENCE

## A GRAVE SITUATION

■ The Church Of England became the latest adversary of Acclaim when it objected to the publisher paying relatives of the recently departed to advertise on gravestones. The game was *Shadowman 2*, suitably devilish in nature, but it backfired when it transpired that planning permission from local authorities was required for what was, in effect, outdoor advertising.




EVIDENCE

## RISE OF THE REFUSE

■ While it wasn't an original Acclaim property, its role in the *Rise Of The Robots* hype machine was undisguised. Early screenshots of the game looked amazing, and it rose on a crest of successful beat-'em-ups such as *Street Fighter* and *Mortal Kombat*. But Acclaim's Mega Drive and SNES versions were the same as the rest: an unplayable, broken, and it's a standard-bearer for over-hyped games.



EVIDENCE

## BLOODY ADVERTS

■ Acclaim was so proud of the high level of the crimson stuff in its game *Gladiator*, that its PR department thought up this stunt where a special type of advert in bus shelters and streets would seep fake blood for a few days, before the cleaning dept turned up. The announcement did the trick and got a rather average game above-average attention, and like many of Acclaim's PR stunts, the idea was withdrawn once the furore reached its peak.



## DEFINING GAMES

The games that put Acclaim on the map, for better or for worse



### TIGER-HELI

■ Acclaim made its name in the Eighties by publishing NES games, and this shoot-'em-up was arguably the best of the lot, and according to Greg, its biggest seller. Developed for the arcades by Toaplan, *Tiger-Heli* was published by Taito with a native Japanese version coded by Micronics, before Acclaim secured the licence to distribute the conversion in the US. It's a insanely playable and addictive game, if a little simplistic by today's standards, and was succeeded by *Twin Cobra* in 1987.



### NBA JAM

■ Acclaim had a good relationship with Midway, and had already published the arcade giant's previous basketball game, *Arch Rivals*, for multiple home systems. Midway's follow-up arcade game was again two-on-two basketball and very successful, even giving rise to a new genre of action sports games. All the Acclaim conversions (Mega Drive, SNES, Game Gear, Mega-CD) were well-received, apart from the Game Boy which struggled to adapt the fast-paced game to its small screen.



### MORTAL KOMBAT

■ Having renegotiated its deal with Midway following a string of not-so-impressive releases, Acclaim hit the big time with this one-on-one fighter that took on the almighty *Street Fighter*. Buoyed by the controversy that followed the game wherever it went, *Mortal Kombat* became the game that defined the direction Acclaim would take over the next ten years. Its USP was its gore; with this removed from the Nintendo versions, it was inevitable the uncensored Sega versions would sell best.



### TUROK: DINOSAUR HUNTER

■ It may have infuriated gamers thanks to its respawning enemies that contrasted annoyingly with limited ammunition, but there's no doubt this N64 exclusive title was a huge seller for Acclaim, assisted by the popularity of dinosaurs at the time and a lack of similar titles on the Nintendo console. A PC port followed but the game met a quick death on a format swamped with first person shooters. A key game then, but it hasn't aged well.



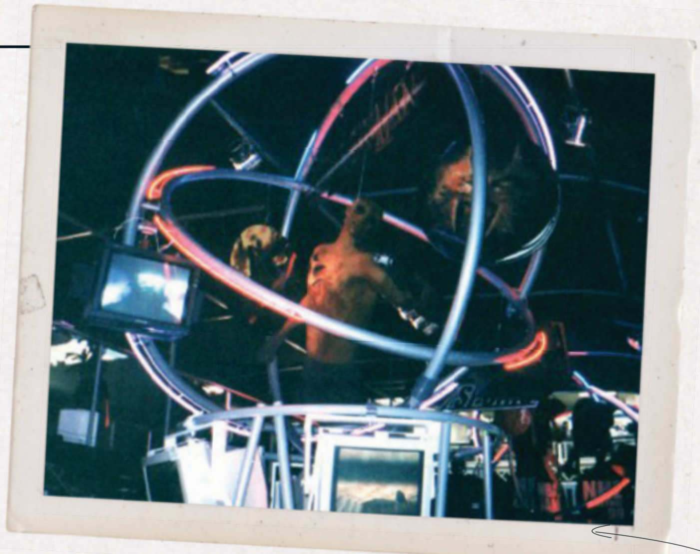
### BURNOUT 2: POINT OF IMPACT

■ Acclaim struck gold when it sealed a deal to publish Criterion's superb series of racing games. With realism not even given a spot in the back seat, the original game set the template while this sequel upped the thrills, speeds and crashes. Encouraging the player to break practically every rule of the road, *Burnout 2* rewarded close shaves, speeding and dangerous driving with a boost meter enabling crazier moves. Superb graphics and sound completed a winning package.

## NOTES CONT.

▶ company Tele-Communications Inc. (or TCI) invested in 25 per cent of the company (to the tune of 150 million dollars according to Greg), Acclaim suddenly found itself incredibly cash rich. This sudden influx saw Greg seek several acquisitions as Acclaim reasoned that the only way forward was for it to have its own development houses. In this hectic period, three notable developers were bought, and they all had previous experience with Acclaim. In America, Salt Lake City's Sculptured Software and Texas-based Iguana Entertainment became Acclaim studios, with the latter also coming with another studio in the form of Iguana's UK-based operation in Teesside. Another UK software developer, Probe Software, was also acquired and became Acclaim London, latterly Acclaim Cheltenham. Graphic artist Trevor Storey remembers when the takeover of Iguana UK took place. "I was there when we were doing *NBA Jam* for Acclaim and we were on the 14th floor of a tower block in Teesside. We eventually moved down to the larger 13th floor offices, but when Iguana became part of Acclaim, we moved to brand new offices in Stockton." Acclaim Teesside's biggest game was *Shadowman* and its sequel. "*Shadowman* was great to work on," remembers Trevor. "And Simon [Phipps] and Guy [Miller, the game's designers] made it so much fun right from the start. The idea of including things like voodoo and hell was right up my street, so I just loved it." *Shadowman* was the second of a series of games based around characters from the Valiant imprint of comics. The first had been an early title for the Nintendo 64 and was based upon the label's most famous of creations.

"We paid 75 million dollars [for Valiant] and we lost a shitload of money," exclaims Greg with a wide smile. "It was a banker. It was the third biggest comics company, and we were looking for something else to invest in. It presented itself as it was known we were looking at other properties. We actually wanted Marvel, but didn't have enough cash." The idea was simple: Acclaim would continue to publish Valiant's line of popular titles while also developing games based around its characters. "But we bought into the comic book business right at the top of the market," laments Greg, "and then all of a sudden it starts to fall apart. And we rode it all the way down." That first game was, of course, *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter*. Greg elaborates: "I remember Nintendo were holding on to the vestiges of the cartridge era and everyone was pointing to Sony. We'd built a motion capture studio, which cost roughly ten million dollars, and were aiming to use it with the products. And *Turok* was one of the first 3D shooters. It had tight gameplay and great graphics. I remember showing it off to people and they would sit there spellbound and want to see more." Rod Cousens, who was by now the president of Acclaim Europe recalls how, despite pressure to publish on the PlayStation, *Turok* became a N64-exclusive title. "Nintendo was launching its new machine and was demanding exclusivity from us. This was problematic for Acclaim properties because we had a rather strong repertoire of licensed products which had to be available on all completing platforms. We searched for a solution within our IP and came up with *Turok*. It was at a time when dinosaurs were vogue among a young audience – and it worked."



Acclaim's Shadowman stand at the ECTS show in London.

NOTES CONT:

**By the late-Nineties, Acclaim was still acquiring new licences. The Austin studio specialized in sporting games such as *NFL Quarterback Club* and *All-Star Baseball*. Meantime, Acclaim Europe created many** of the company's infamous and controversial publicity stunts. "In Europe, we were edgy and prepared to take more risks and had a very creative marketing team," notes Rod. "They used to brainstorm ideas, and our PR head, Simon Smith-Wright, came up with the campaigns for the *Burnout* [speed tickets] and the *Shadowman* gravestones, which provided great press coverage for the games." Unfortunately, despite the headlines from tabloids, all was not well at Acclaim. Competing studios were abundant; licensing costs had sky-rocketed; and consumers were becoming much more savvy thanks to the rise of the internet, although in the case of *BMX XXX*, that part of the equation worked exceedingly well. "The idea behind it came from the studio that had written *Dave Mirra BMX*," recalls Greg. "They gave us the proposal, and in terms of development cost, it was ok, so we took a shot at it." Having seen the controversy that *Grand Theft Auto* had created, Acclaim saw an opportunity, and a BMX simulation featuring semi-naked women must have seemed like a good idea at the time. "We got hundreds and thousands of hits, huge amounts of traffic on our website," boasts Greg. "But then retail backed away from it. Videogames were still often perceived as toys, so basically, there was no distribution for the game, and that caused it to collapse." Greg pauses before noting solemnly, "It was a bad mistake. It didn't fit."

> "WE DID BATMAN FOREVER, AND THAT GAME WAS WRITTEN VERY POORLY"
> GREG FISCHBACH

It was the beginning of the end. The pressure to satisfy shareholders, as well as consumers, was taking its toll. "We did *Batman Forever*, and that game was written very poorly," admits Greg. "When you deal with creative properties, sometimes it just doesn't work. We did a skating game that got great reviews [*Aggressive Inline*], but it sold nothing." Perhaps more telling were the cracks that had started to appear at the very core of Acclaim, as Rod reveals. "From my perspective there were two fundamental factors that contributed to Acclaim's demise. Firstly, it was run as a triumvirate with Rob Holmes the glue that held it together; when he left, we lost a lot. The second was a weakness in product development, combined with a changing, more demanding and sophisticated audience that was not as easily swayed by marketing." It was a challenging period for the publisher which had got some way out of control. "And the question was how to solve it," says Greg. "We had recognised it the year before; but at the end of the day we were unable to answer it." When we push Greg to elucidate on this ambiguous statement, he cites the breakdown of relations alluded to by Rod above. "The foundation of the company was always my and Jimmy's ability to work together," says Greg carefully. "And when that ceased, it changed the dynamic. Together we could solve problems; separately we couldn't, and it was pulling apart. Businesses are actually really fragile. Acclaim had a lot of love in it, but when it breaks, it breaks. And it broke."

The end for Acclaim was a messy affair. Threats of legal action and numerous accusations against its former founders were abundant. In its lifetime, its games were sometimes brilliant and its methods eye-opening. And sometimes its games were terrible, and its marketing cringe-worthy. But it was never, ever, boring. *




[N64] *South Park Rally* was another derivative and lamentable game inspired by the popular cartoon.



## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

**Here's what became of some of Acclaim's major players and figureheads**



### GREGORY FISCHBACH

■ After Acclaim closed, Greg moved away from games and founded his own venture capital firm. His latest venture is Rabb.it, a browser-based chat facility that offers a host of other social-networking and video features.



### ROD COUSENS CBE

■ In May 2005, Rod was appointed CEO of Codemasters before being awarded a CBE in honour of services to the videogame industry in 2010. Earlier this year, he left Codemasters to join Cambridge developer Jagex.



### TREVOR STOREY

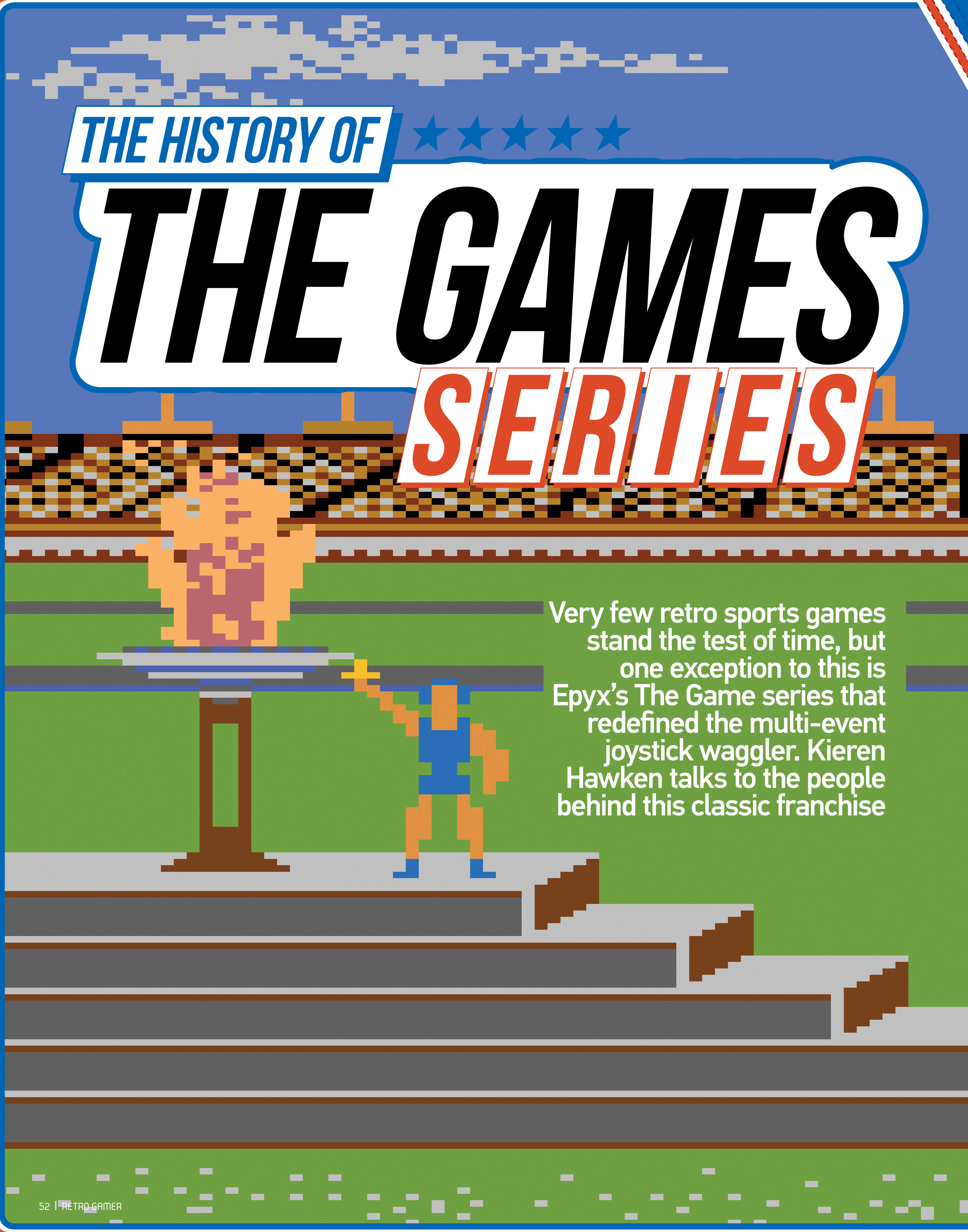
■ Today Trevor is a freelance 2D/3D artist involved in concept art, book and album covers. You can check out his latest work at smilastorey.wix.com/trevor-storey.




[PC] One of Acclaim London's most accomplished games: the RC racer, *Re-volt*.



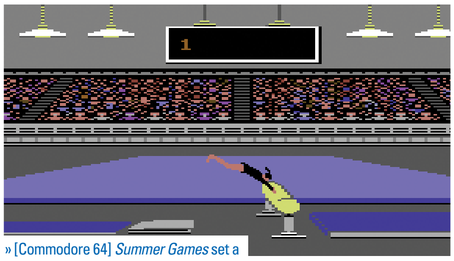
[PS2] Acclaim's strong TV connections continued with this third-person action game based around the series *Alias*.



## THE HISTORY OF

# THE GAMES SERIES

**Very few retro sports games stand the test of time, but one exception to this is Epyx's The Game series that redefined the multi-event joystick waggler. Kieren Hawken talks to the people behind this classic franchise**



» [Commodore 64] *Summer Games* set a high standard for the rest of the series to follow. This is the Gymnastics event.




» [Commodore 64] *California Games* was a massive success for Epyx. The C64 version is, once again, very good.



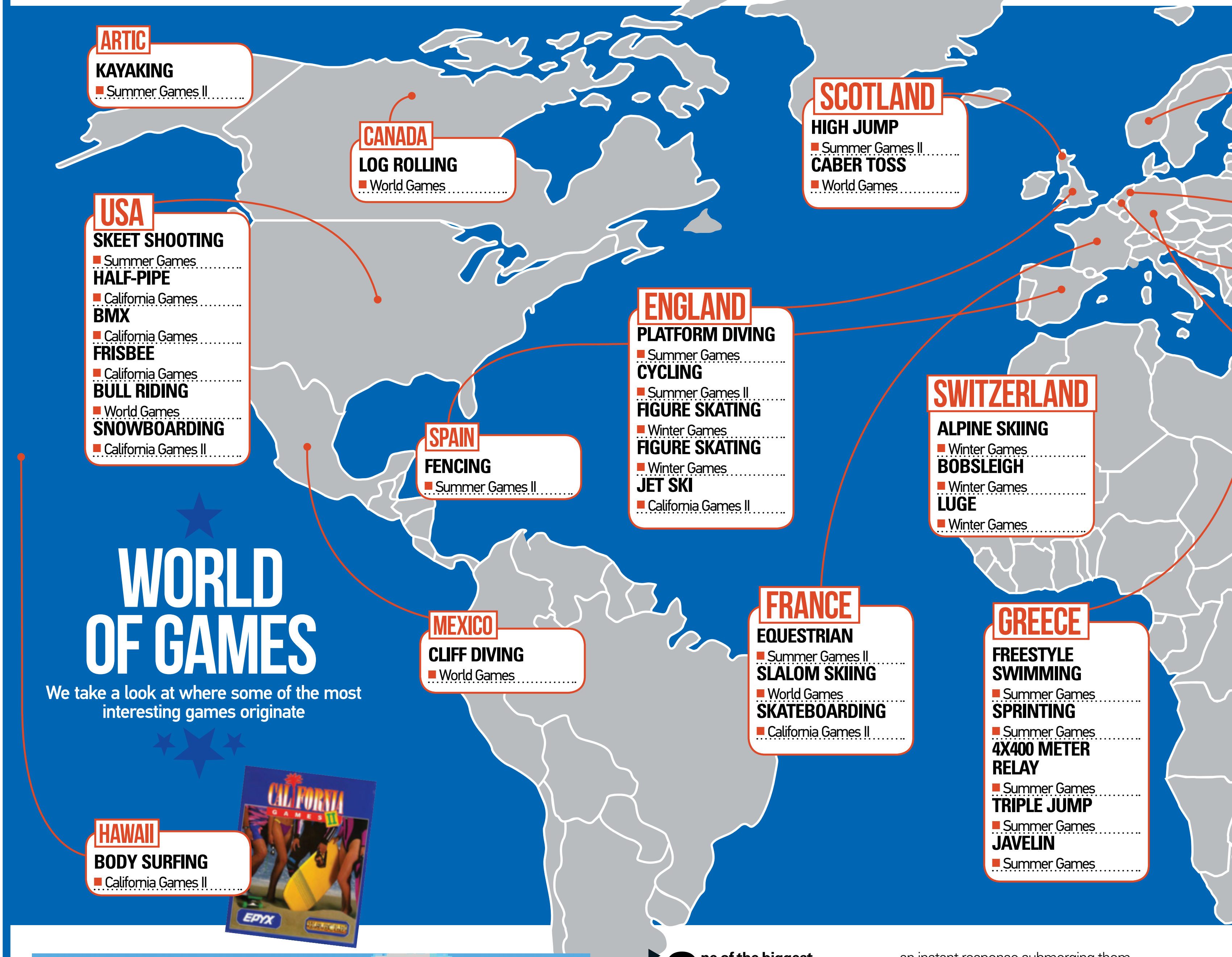

» [Commodore 64] *World Games* was a fair bit wackier than previous games in the series, which was nice.

Epyx was one of the earliest pioneers of videogames. Titles such as *Temple Of Apshai*, *Jumpman* and *Pitstop* were real favourites among early owners of the Commodore 64, Atari 8-bit and other home PCs of the time. But its biggest success came when it chose to change its focus to sports games, starting off with *Summer Games*, and the rest, as they say, is history – history we will elaborate on, that is. Originally there was no intention to make a series, Epyx just wanted to produce a game to coincide with the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles, California. Not just because it was the biggest sporting event in that year's calendar but also because Epyx was a Californian company and sports were a huge part of the Californian lifestyle. *Summer Games* was initially written for the C64 and was a huge success, so other versions quickly followed. Chuck Sommerville, creator of classic strategy puzzle game *Chip's Challenge*, was the man behind one of those ports. "My first project at Epyx was to actually convert *Summer Games* from the C64 to the Apple II, [Epyx] hired me specifically for that project," he recalls. "Converting the game to the Apple II was a real challenge as I had no hardware sprites and so I had to write my own routines to try and replicate this, and I had never written anything like that before. The C64 programmers were really impressed with my code so I was invited to join them permanently to work on the rest of the videogames."

The huge success of *Summer Games* saw Epyx dive head first into a sequel, *Summer Games II* that would follow-up less than a year later. This is where the main man behind most of *The Games* series comes in: one Matt Householder, who is perhaps better known these days as the producer of the *Diablo* series. Matt remembers the extreme pressure from the bosses at Epyx to come up with a follow-up game. "The tremendous success of *Summer Games* in 1984 demanded a sequel, of course. And Epyx immediately rolled its internal staff into developing *Summer Games II* for release as soon as possible – in the spring of 1985. We pretty much started planning out a sequel as soon as the first game was done." Chuck also took a key role in the sequel, moving up from porting duty to become one of the main men as he had previously explained. So we had to ask him how difficult it was to decide what new events to add when all the most popular ones had already been used in the first game. "Deciding the events was like a big round table discussion, we would just write loads of things down on a big blackboard and then work out which [ideas] would work best. I remember at lot of it came down to what people thought they could do best, for example Kevin Norman was really into writing tools and had made this really cool animation program for the Equestrian event. We ultimately ended up using that engine for all the subsequent games."

# WORLD OF GAMES

We take a look at where some of the most interesting games originate



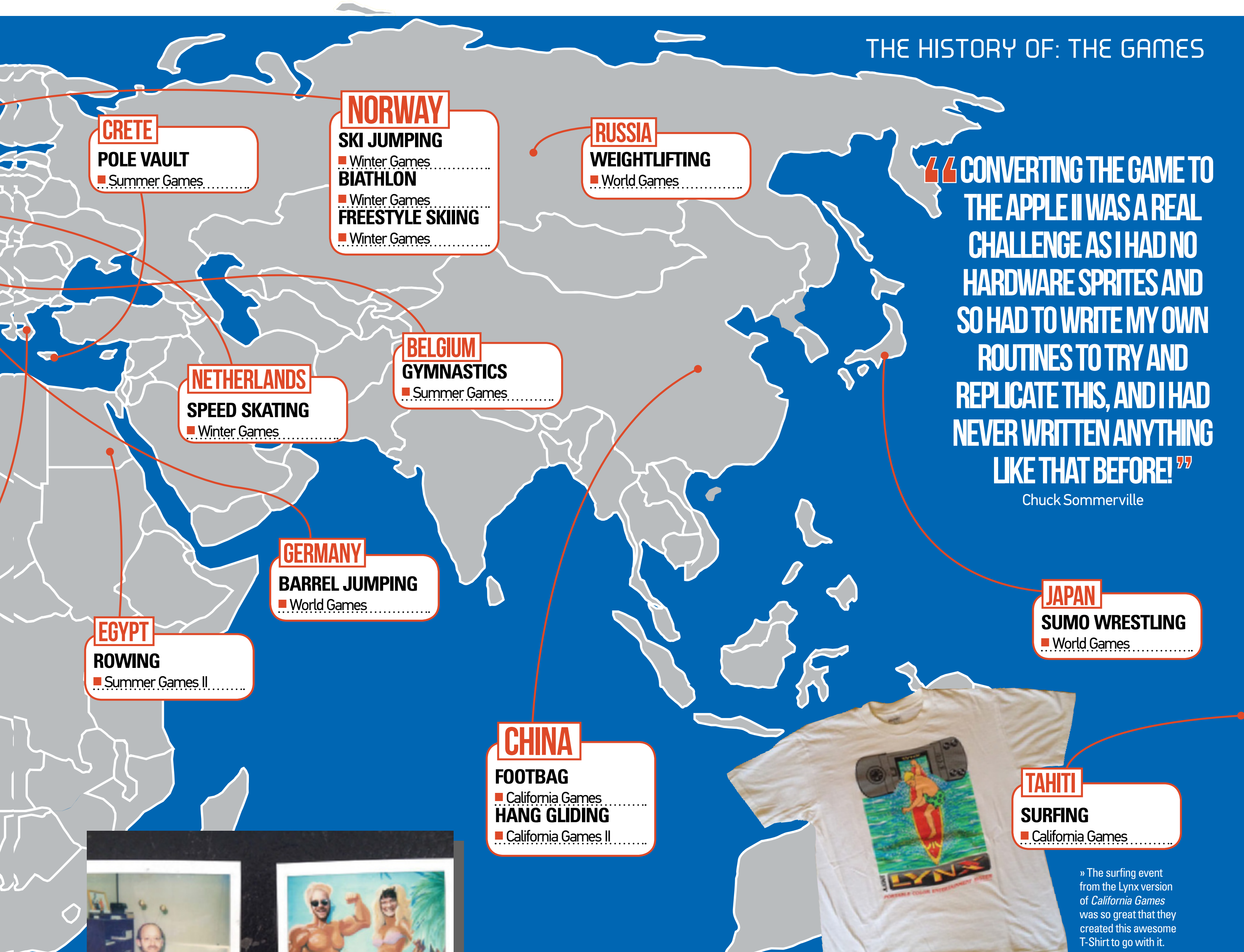




» [Atari ST] Although it had an interesting array of events, *California Games II* failed to match the success of the original.

**One of the biggest challenges with both the *Summer Games* titles was getting the games** to look as realistic as possible on the humble 8-bit machines. Arthur 'Art' Koch was one of the lead artists on the series and offers us his insight. "The biggest challenge was shading things realistically with highlights, shadows and midtones. If a figure's arm was only two pixels wide you could only use a dark and a light. I tried more of a flat stylised approach but that wouldn't have been consistent with the rest of the game and the style people became to expect from videogames. Available colours were limited and very saturated so it was made for kind of a cartoony look. The number of frames per animation was very limited so we resorted to exaggerated key frames, that I thought was more fun than the motion capture that came later. The player got an instant response submerging them into the experience and the exaggerated poses were compelling. The biggest challenge for a long time was keeping the run/walk animations from 'skating' and getting animation to play back the way I intended it. To this day I still see characters skating around and running in place. That wasn't a limitation of 8-bit, though, just an execution shortcoming people have become to expect from videogames. Anti-aliasing the figure against the background to smooth the 'jaggies' was a challenge when you had no tool to allow you to see the sprite against the background until you saw it in the game, though."

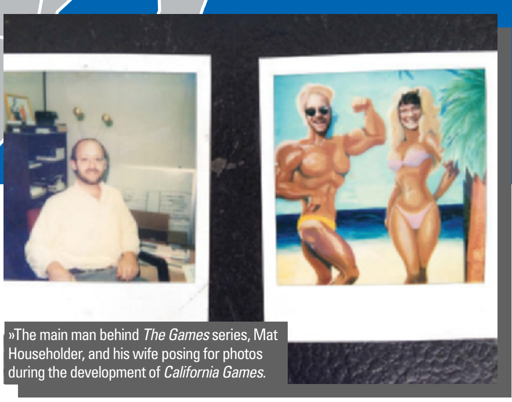
After *Summer Games* was finished it then seemed natural to follow it up with a game based on the Winter Olympics, but the tough schedule at Epyx had taken its toll on the staff. "By that time Epyx's programmers and artists had been become burnt out on the *Games*




**"CONVERTING THE GAME TO THE APPLE II WAS A REAL CHALLENGE AS I HAD NO HARDWARE SPRITES AND SO HAD TO WRITE MY OWN ROUTINES TO TRY AND REPLICATE THIS, AND I HAD NEVER WRITTEN ANYTHING LIKE THAT BEFORE!"**

Chuck Sommerville

» The surfing event from the Lynx version of *California Games* was so great that they created this awesome T-Shirt to go with it.



»The main man behind *The Games* series, Mat Householder, and his wife posing for photos during the development of *California Games*.

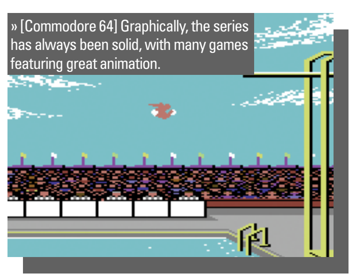
series." Matt elaborates. "Thus, *Winter Games* was contracted out to Action Graphics, an Illinois developer in the midst of some turmoil – in that it was failing to make payroll. The founder had moved to Colorado, leaving most of the staff behind. I was hired by Epyx in the summer of 1985 and soon given responsibility to manage *Winter Games*' development, making sure that it shipped in time for the fall Xmas selling season. Luckily for me and Epyx, the developers were also dedicated to finishing the game with attention to quality – banking on collecting royalty payments later." But despite the dedication of the developers Epyx still ended up having to get involved in the project and make changes. Matt explains: "Epyx had asked Action Graphics for a design proposal on *Winter Games* and Richard Ditton conducted a brainstorming session with the rest of the Action Graphics design team: Bob Ogdon, Elaine Ditton (now Hodgson), Lonnie Ropp, Carl Norgren, and Dave Thiel.

"The technical design document that Richard recently uncovered listed just six events: Bobsled, Biathlon, Figure Skating, Freestyle Skating, Ski Jump, and Hot Dog Aerials. With the available resources of one programmer, one sound designer, two artists and six months, Richard had to cut the initial brainstorm wish list down to those events he was sure he could program before the shipping date in August. Richard picked Biathlon because he thought it would be unique and fun. Bobsled had a 3D, first-person-removed perspective that was the hardest to program in the amount of time allotted. Hot Dog Aerials was not a real Olympic event – and was the first movement away from the staid Olympics. At the last minute Epyx convinced Action Graphics to add a seventh event, Speed Skating, with a new contract offering a much-needed advance payment along with the source code of *Summer Games II*'s Cycling event. The sales department insisted on more than six events – since *Summer Games* had seven and *Summer II* had eight." *Winter Games* went on to be a bigger success than the *Summer Games* titles had, so Epyx was very eager to keep up the momentum.

"Epyx's internal art team had been critical of the art quality in *Winter Games*, and so they were eager to produce ▶



» [ZX Spectrum] *Summer Games II* featured an interesting range of events, including Equestrian and Fencing.



» [Commodore 64] Graphically, the series has always been solid, with many games featuring great animation.




» [Atari ST] Unlike the earlier games a dark tone can be found in *California Games II*, which really grates.

▶ the art for the next *Games* title and set things straight," Matt enthuses. "Unfortunately, Epyx's internal team was occupied with other projects and, recalling the *Summer I* and *II* double crunch time, we were still leery of working on another *Games* project. So marketing chief Bob Botch held a meeting that included some marketing and sales staff, artists, programmers, my boss (Bob Lindsey) and me. We quickly agreed that our goal should be to come up with 'events the Olympics forgot'. Most of us were familiar with the ABC TV show *Wide World of Sports* – 'Spanning the globe to bring you the constant variety of sport!' Using that as a model, we came up with the name *World Games* and a dozen or so ideas for events. I proposed that as the next event loaded, we show a globe turning and an airline logo as a product placement. Continental Airlines was later signed as the sponsor. I captured the brainstorming meeting in my notes, added my own ideas, and whittled the list of events down to eight that I liked. I then wrote descriptions of the events including the user interaction for the artists and programmers to refer to as their game design document for implementation."

**Choosing the events for *World Games* was not as simple as the previous titles where they had pretty much picked themselves.** Not only did Matt have to consider which ones would actually work he wanted them to appeal to the target audiences as he explains. "But I was not the sole designer – the programmers at K-Byte in Troy, Michigan along with Epyx's art staff were truly the boots on the ground in implementing the events based on my direction. I chose events from around the world that I thought would have broad appeal in our *Games* series markets. Most of the events I'd chosen were related to the host country – Bullriding, Caber Toss, Sumo, and Cliff Diving being prime examples. However, other events had more complicated associations. For example, Russian weightlifters had dominated the sport in the Eighties. On the other hand, I really liked the idea of Barrel Jumping – I remembered watching it on *Wide World Of Sports* in the Sixties – and I put it in Germany because it was an Olympic powerhouse. The athletes wearing speed skates made me think of northern Europe. Slalom Skiing was set in France because of Jean-Claude Killy (and, cryptically in-jokey, it reminded me of the early *SNL* skit involving French actress Claudine Longet). My choice of the music to accompany the Log Rolling event was another in-joke. It was a classic Stephen Foster tune from the *Monty Python* sketch with Canadian Mounties – the one that goes: 'I'm a lumberjack and I'm okay…'" *World Games* proved to be more niche than its predecessor's but was successful enough for Epyx to persue the series further with another more off-the-wall installment.

"During the summer of 1986 while I was wrapping up the development of *World Games*, I began to think about what to do next," Matt reminisces. "One weekend morning as my wife, Candi Strecker, and I walked to breakfast in the Excelsior, our hilly, working-class neighbourhood of San Francisco, we saw a kid riding a skateboard down the middle of Lisbon Street. Candi looked at me and commented, 'You should do a game with skateboarding in it.' Immediately, I was struck with the epiphany that my next game should be themed around alternative, youth-oriented sports. Candi and I brainstormed as we walked two blocks to breakfast and I decided on half-pipe skateboarding, surfing, Frisbee, BMX, hacky-sack, and roller-skating. All vaguely Californian and reminiscent of the Sixties and Seventies, yet with a modern Eighties edge. While at work the next week, I wrote up a brief design pitch outlining the game, calling it *Rad Sports*. Sometime later, I presented it at a brainstorming meeting where it was approved for full development using internal resources starting immediately – marketing, sales, programmers, artists, and management all got it." Chuck was picked as the lead programmer on the project, not just because he had been involved in the previous games but also because he was no stranger to one of the key events. "I was a keen skateboarder from the Seventies and used to hit the skateboard parks every day, I could do all the tricks and was pretty good at it! I carried on skateboarding right into my Fifties, it was only a bad concussion that made me give up." Chuck also recognised very early that *California Games* would be something to get excited about. "*California Games* was a special project, I'm not from California, I'm from West Virginia so the whole experience of moving to California was exciting. Everybody who lives there knows that it's a very special place. I had a royalty agreement with Epyx over *California Games* and with that money I made the down payment first house, and thanks to that I am now mortgage-free, so you could say that *California Games* very




» [ZX Spectrum] Biathlon remains one of the most challenging events in the series, and one of the most satisfying.

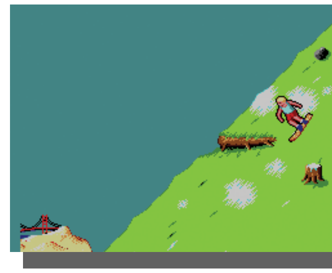
## SPORTING SPIN-OFFS

### Epyx release polarising sporting games

**In 1988 the distributors of the Epyx games in Europe, US Gold, were keen to cash-in on the huge success of the *Games* series further. So it worked with Epyx to create two new spin-off titles, these would be called *The Games: Summer Edition* and *The Games: Winter Edition*. Both titles feature a repetition of many of events from the original *Summer* and *Winter Games* as well as a few new ones. However, both games are redesigned to focus more on single-player gameplay rather than the multiplayer madness of the Epyx titles. The *Summer Edition* actually pits you as a member of the 1988 US Olympic team trying to win a medal for your country. *The Games: Summer Edition* was also briefly known as *Summer Games 3* before both titles were renamed as *Go For Gold* for their budget release to avoid any confusion with the games they were inspired by.**

» [PC] *Winter Games* had a great selection of events and appeared on a large number of different systems.



> “I SPENT MANY HOURS WATCHING SKATE VIDEOS TO CREATE THE CHARACTER ANIMATION AND GOT TO MEET CELEBRITY SKATEBOARDERS THAT MARKETING HIRED TO PROMOTE OUR GAMES”
>
> Arthur Koch

much changed my life!” Unlike previous titles in the *Games* series, *California Games* turned out very popular Matt is keen to recognise this. “*California Games* was on its way to breaking the mould of the stodgy Olympic Games metaphor that had inspired it, effectively defining itself as cool to a mass audience. Its popularity likely led to the creation of *The X Games* by ESPN which tapped into the same alternative, rebellious, consumer/sports vein.”

***California Games* was a huge worldwide success, being released on everything from the Atari 2600 and Apple II to 16-bit** consoles such as the Mega Drive and Lynx. So it was understandable that Epyx would pretty much demand a sequel. But all was not well at the company, the Handy project (which became the Atari Lynx) had bankrupted the company and it was forced into liquidation. Chuck recalls this stage of turmoil very well: “Overnight, Epyx, went down from 150 programmers to 15, and it was up to those of us left to finish any projects that we were still contracted to complete.” Matt’s role on *California Games II* was very different to his original game. “My work on *California Games II* was a rescue project, cobbling together a releasable title to help Epyx survive. Gil Colgate, Chuck Sommerville, Art Koch and Kevin Furry were instrumental in finishing it.” Speaking of Art, he has much fonder memories of the project: “I’m proud of the skateboard level in *California Games II* as I spent many hours watching skate videos to create the character animation and got to meet celebrity skateboarders that marketing hired to promote our games. The intro was fun to animate and included lots of graffiti which I researched. The cinematic launched the player into the game rather than watching a movie, then you pressed start for a dramatic, seamless intro into the game. Doing a 360 in the tunnel was probably the most fun and the blood splat crash onto the concrete was entertaining as well. The death screen with all your friends and family standing over you grave made losing more fun as did all your friends waiting for you at the end of the tunnel.” *California Games II* wasn’t as polished as its predecessor and only just made it out the door with several ports of the game being cancelled. We always think it’s better to end a celebration of a series on a positive note and Art’s passionate recollection of the series does just the job: “What set them apart from the competition? The great box art branding, gameplay, and graphics were more professional than the competitors at the time. The rebel coolness inspired other games like *Road Rash* and *Tony Hawk’s*, which many of us went to work on.” *

**Special thanks to Matt Householder, Chuck Sommerville and Arthur Koch.**



» [PC] Many of the team behind *The Games* series went on to develop *3DO Decathlon*, it only ended up being released on the PC despite the name suggesting otherwise.

# SPORTING RIVALS

**Which game ruled the podium?**

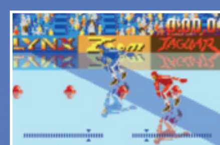
## GOLD Track & Field

■ When retro gamers think of athletics games Konami’s 1983 arcade game is probably the first game that springs to mind. With six great events, two-player competitive play and intuitive controls it’s no surprise that this game was such a big hit and it went on to spawn numerous sequels. *Track & Field* also saw its way to many of the home systems of the time where it enjoyed similar popularity.




## SILVER Alpine Games

■ This fabulous Atari Lynx game comes from nowhere to steal the silver medal, and rightfully so. The first game to be released by Duranik, now famous for Dreamcast shooter *Sturmwind*, it features a grand total of nine different events and owes a great deal to *Epyx’s Winter Games*. The use of stunning rendered visuals on *Alpine Games* set new standards in graphics on Atari’s powerful handheld.



## BRONZE Daley Thompson’s Decathlon

■ There were three games in Ocean’s *Daley Thompson* series but *Decathlon* is the best remembered and was responsible for many broken joysticks thanks to its reliance on joystick waggling. Released in 1984 to cash-in on the athlete’s gold medal success at the Olympics it features a very credible ten different events on one cassette.



## RUNNER UP Decathlon

■ Activision’s groundbreaking 1983 title *Decathlon* was the one that really established the multi-event sports game as a genre. It might be a bit clunky by today’s standards but there is no doubting its place in videogame history.



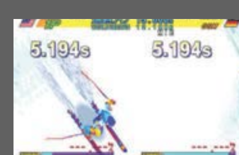
## RUNNER UP Athlete Kings

■ Also known as *Decathlete*, Sega’s excellent 1994 arcade game was followed a year later by an equally impressive Sega Saturn port. While it features ten different events it’s the eccentric characters that this game is remembered for.



## RUNNER UP Winter Heat

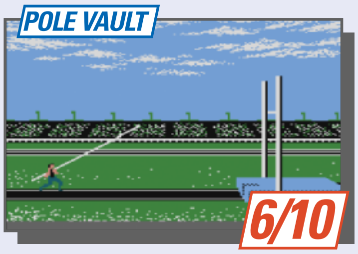
■ The success of *Athlete Kings* led to a Winter Olympics-themed sequel. Also featuring ten events and a colourful range of characters, AM3’s game might not be as well known as its prequel but it’s just as worth checking out.



# THE MAIN EVENT

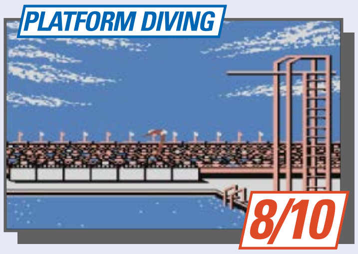
*All the games and how we rate them*

**POLE VAULT**



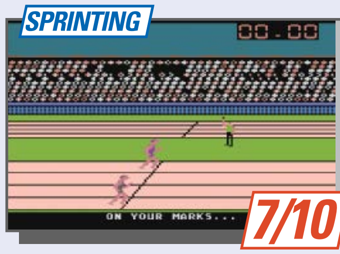
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**PLATFORM DIVING**



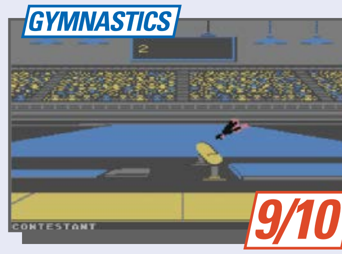
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**SPRINTING**



7/10

**GYMNASTICS**



9/10

**FREESTYLE SWIMMING**



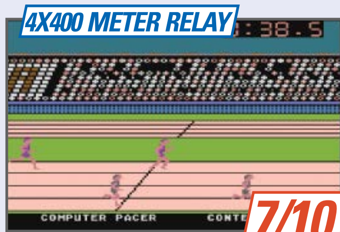
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**SKEET SHOOTING**



8/10

**4X400 METER RELAY**



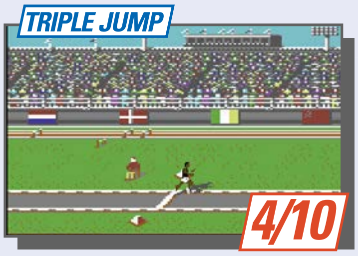
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**ROWING**



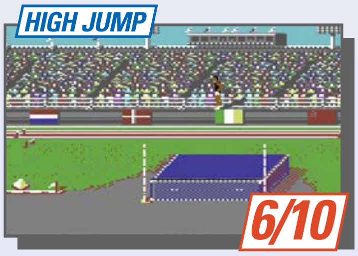
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**TRIPLE JUMP**



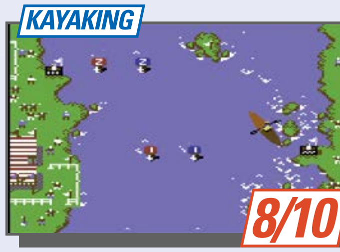
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**HIGH JUMP**



6/10

**KAYAKING**



8/10

**JAVELIN**



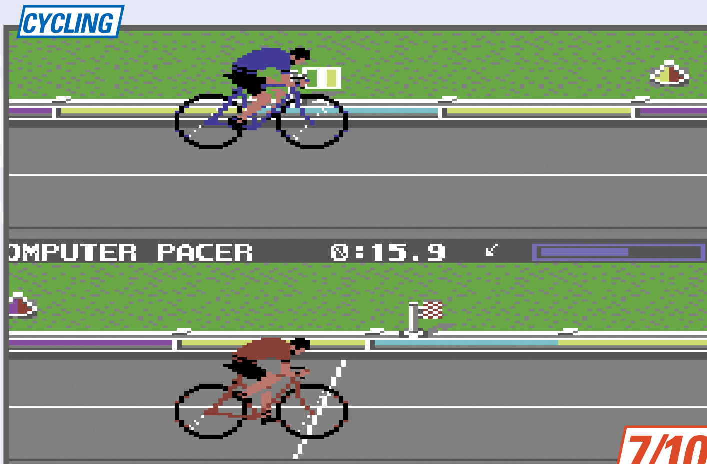
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**EQUESTRIAN**



7/10

**CYCLING**



7/10

**ALPINE SKIING**



8/10

**FENCING**



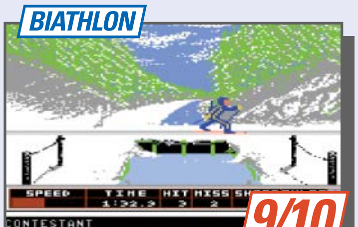
7/10

**SKI JUMPING**



6/10

**BIATHLON**



9/10

**BOBSLEIGH**



9/10

**FIGURE SKATING**



4/10

**SPEED SKATING**



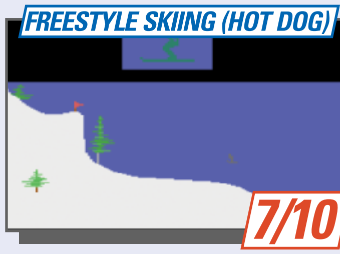
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**LUGE**



8/10

**FREESTYLE SKIING (HOT DOG)**



7/10

**HALF-PIPE**



8/10

**ROLLER SKATING**



7/10

**SURFING**



10/10

**BMX**



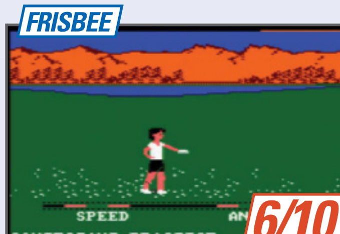
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**FOOTBAG**



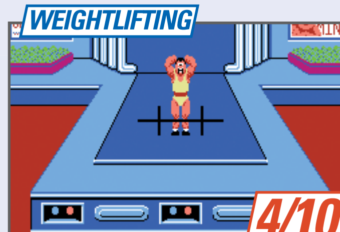
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**FRISBEE**



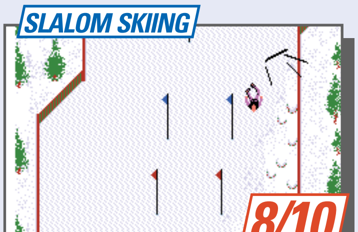
6/10

**WEIGHTLIFTING**



4/10

**SLALOM SKIING**



8/10

**LOG ROLLING**



7/10

**CLIFF DIVING**



7/10

**CABER TOSS**



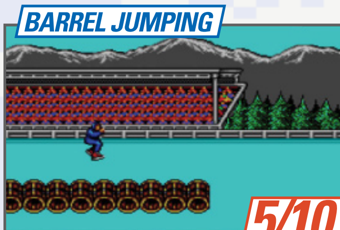
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**BULL RIDING**



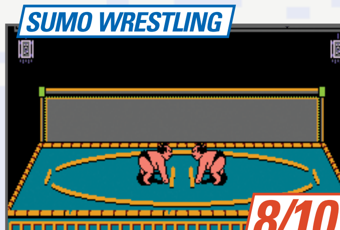
9/10

**BARREL JUMPING**



5/10

**SUMO WRESTLING**



8/10

**HANG GLIDING**



7/10

**JET SKI**



6/10

**SNOWBOARDING**



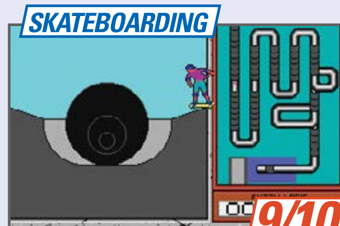
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**BODY SURFING**



6/10

**SKATEBOARDING**



9/10





» RETROREVIVAL

# Thunder Force IV

## CHRIS HILL REMEMBERS THIS FANTASTIC SHOOTER

**» MEGA DRIVE » TECHNOSOFT » 1992**

**When it came to shooters, this is one of the best games that came to the Mega Drive and I don't say that lightly. It took three attempts beforehand to make this the game that it is. That's not saying the previous incarnations weren't any good – they were there to help build and progress to this awesome fourth instalment.**

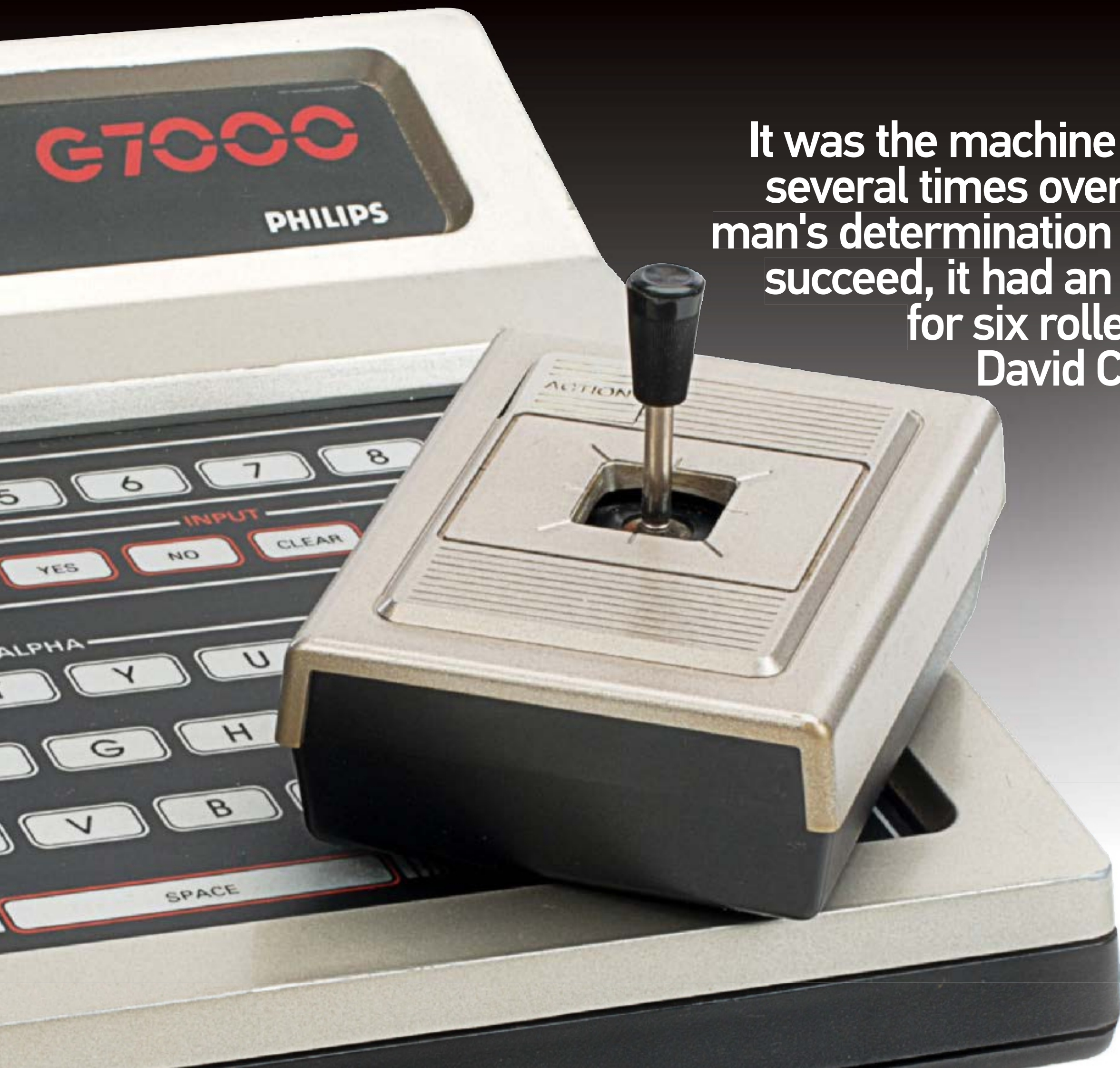
When I think back to the time when I played *Thunderforce IV* console games were starting to seriously give the arcade coin-ops a real run for their money thanks to their excellent sound and superb gameplay (*Sonic The Hedgehog 2* and *Streets Of Rage* immediately sprint to mind). And that's not even mentioning the graphics – because back then all we could talk about was graphical improvements from year to year.

If the Mega Drive was pitted against some of the amazing arcade shooters at the time during the early-Nineties, this was the game to compete with – and it held up very well with its visual style and blistering speed. Graphically, *Thunderforce IV* is a beautiful game with a magnificent array of colours and sprite detail.

Levels change, you feel like you are progressing and it is a fantastic gaming experience – well worth the fight and perseverance throughout! This was the Nineties and games like *Thunder Force IV* reflected a real change in the way console games were seen. It was becoming more a choice to stay at home and play games rather than visit an arcade. Which is sad in some ways, but it's a sign of the times and the manner in which console games would impress us from then and in years to come. *




# PHILIPS VIDEOPAC




**It was the machine Philips tried to kill several times over but thanks to one man's determination to see the console succeed, it had an impact on gaming for six rollercoaster years, as David Crookes explains…**







# G7000

**Let's not beat about the bush. If you are asked to name a console from the second generation of videogaming, chances are you are likely** to mention the Atari 2600 or the Intellivision. Relatively few gamers will namecheck the Philips Videopac G7000 and if they do, it's most likely to be mere lip service.

But that is a real shame because there is much to be said about this successor to the world's first commercial home videogame console, the legendary Magnavox Odyssey. For this was a machine full of innovative ideas which sold more than two million units. And it was also the canvas for one man's incredible and prolific contribution to gaming. When all is said and done, the G7000 represented a sizeable swathe of gaming history and it deserves to be brought in from the sidelines.

Its development began at the beginning of 1977 when Alfred diScipio, then the president of Philips' subsidiary Magnavox, announced the company was making a new console. Within a few months it had signed up Intel as the chip provider, a move that would prove to be crucial for the G7000 in more ways than one.

Not only did the deal allow the G7000 to take advantage of Intel's ROM and RAM, it handed the machine a ready-made microprocessor in the guise of ▶




» Annoyingly, game names aren't on cartridges, meaning you're going to need a very good memory.

## COMPETITORS

How it stacked up against Atari 2600 and Intellivision



### PHILIPS VIDEOPAC G7000

**CPU:** Intel 8048 8-bit microcontroller running at 1.79 MHz
**RAM:** 64 bytes + 128 bytes
**ROM:** 1 kb
**DISPLAY:** 154x100, powered by Intel 8244 (NTSC) or 8245 (PAL)
**COLOURS:** 12
**FORMAT:** Cartridge
**AUDIO:** 1 channel



### ATARI VCS 2600

**CPU:** MOS Technology 6507 at 1.19 MHz
**RAM:** 128 bytes
**ROM:** 4 kb
**DISPLAY:** 160x192, powered by TIA chip
**COLOURS:** 128
**FORMAT:** Cartridge
**AUDIO:** 2 channels



### INTELLIVISION

**CPU:** General Instrument CP1610 at 1MH
**RAM:** 1352 bytes
**ROM:** 7168 bytes
**DISPLAY:** 160x196
**COLOURS:** 16
**FORMAT:** Cartridge
**AUDIO:** 3 channels

▶ the 8048 running at 1.79 MHz. The console could also take advantage of Intel's pioneering video and audio chip, the 8244, and with so much Intel silicon inside the machine, it ensured the chip maker would have a vested interest in trying to make the console a success.

The 8244 was the world's first programmable sprite-based game chip and it was designed by engineers Nick Nichols and Sam Schwartz. It allowed for four sprites on an 8x8 matrix – two of which could be combined to create a larger sprite. It also had eight group objects for backgrounds, titles and scores, as well as a noise generator.

"Intel needed to produce a graphics chip that could be sold for a reasonable price to the mass market because moving graphics around on a TV screen using RAM cost a fortune," says Ed Averett, an electrical engineer and sales representative at Intel. "I went to the folks who laid out silicon and presented the problem. They decided to use content addressable memory and it worked really well."

While the innards were being worked on, the casing was also devised. Rather than simply produce a featureless slab with a cartridge slot, the designers added a full 49-key, built-in alphanumeric membrane keyboard (as well as a couple of hardwired digital controllers, both of which had a solitary fire button and an eight-way directional stick).

> **"The people involved with the console at ground level always saw it as the first step towards a compter"**
> Ed Averett

**The keyboard was created by engineer Roberto Lenarducci and it was tricky to type on** but it certainly showed some ambition. "The keyboard was such a novel thing back in those days, before PCs had become commonplace. Typing messages on the screen was amazing stuff for kids," says collector William Cassidy, who runs The Odyssey Homepage at the-nextlevel.com.

It was also part of a much bolder plan. "The people involved with the console at the ground level always saw it as the first step towards a computer and it was ahead of Apple at the time," says Ed. "The plan was to get people to see it was a computer with keyboard and the idea was to evolve it."

Despite such advances and the impressive design ideas, Magnavox's

» William Cassidy is a big fan of the console and also runs The Odyssey Homepage at the-nextlevel.com.



parent company North American Philips (NAP) wasn't entirely convinced. It lacked confidence that the console could be a success and in August 1977 it made its first attempt to axe it.

Ralph Baer, who had devised the Odyssey, made an impassioned plea to keep development going. He succeeded and the intervention bought the G7000 team some time. It also allowed coder Sam Overton to program some games.

Overton readied sports titles including *Bowling/Basketball* and *Computer Golf* as well as the shooter *Cosmic Conflict* and the simulation *Las Vegas Blackjack* for the expected launch. A cartridge called *Computer Intro* which taught simple coding was also created so that the G7000 could be marketed at parents as much as at children.

But NAP, whose core business was television and audio, still felt videogaming to be a mere sideline. It attempted to pull the plug *again* six months later. "The people that I worked directly with understood games: Mike Staup, the vice president in charge of the videogames division at Magnavox, knew what videogames were going to be," says Ed, who, at the time, was becoming frustrated at the attempts to thwart the console's progress.

"But the problem was that he did not have a seat at the big table at Magnavox or Intel. Those who did – the TV and radio people – were just kind of, 'Ok, you have this niche down there…' but they couldn't be convinced that videogames would be a huge business. They thought it wasn't possible."

## WORLD WIDE SUCCESS

### UNITED STATES
MAGNAVOX ODYSSEY 2

■ Around 50 games were released in the United States and a million consoles had been sold by 1983 but it still lagged behind the Atari 2600 and the Mattel Intellivision in terms of impact. US gamers were the only ones to get The Voice synthesiser, though.

### EUROPE
PHILIPS VIDEOPAC G7000

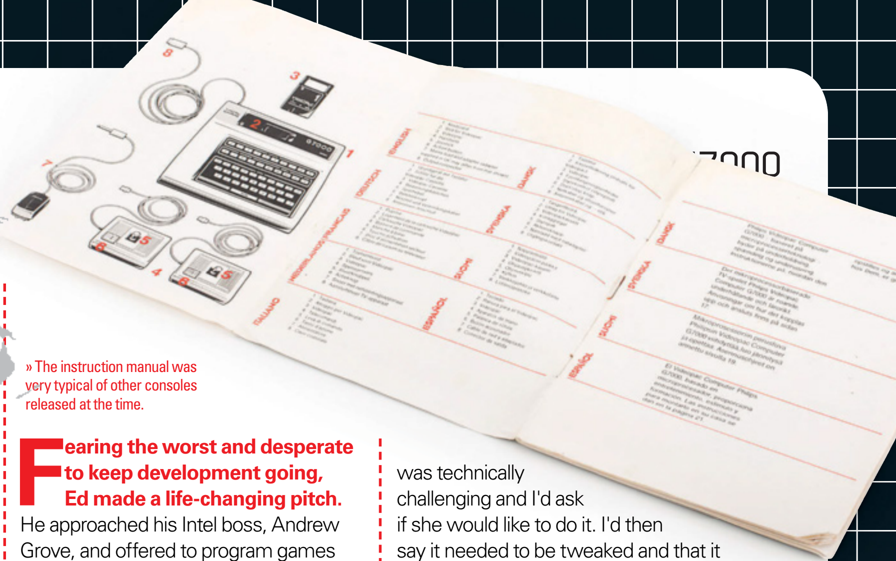
■ The machine went down well in Europe so its superior follow-up, the G7400, was only released there. A Chess Module was made available for G7000 owners and other Videopac consoles were allowed to be produced by the likes of Siera and Jopac.

### BRAZIL
PHILIPS ODYSSEY

■ Released by a company called Planil Comércio, the console was massively popular in Brazil. Games were released in Portuguese and tournaments surrounding the machine's games - notably *K.C.'s Crazy Chase* – were held.

### JAPAN
ODYSSEY 2

■ The console made a late entrance in Japan, being released in December 1982. There is not a lot of information about the machine in this territory but it appears that it retailed at ¥49,800 and not sell well. History shows the NES fared better…



» The instruction manual was very typical of other consoles released at the time.

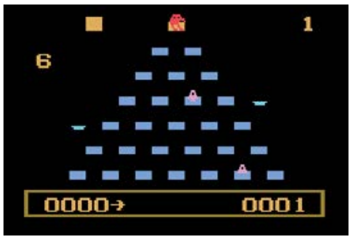
**Fearing the worst and desperate to keep development going, Ed made a life-changing pitch.** He approached his Intel boss, Andrew Grove, and offered to program games for the G7000, saying Intel would be able to sell more chips if the console sold well on the back of a healthy catalogue of games. Grove agreed and a deal was struck which meant Ed would leave Intel and become a freelance games designer working exclusively for the G7000.

In order to do this, Ed had to teach himself assembly language. He also took on a new assistant, his wife Linda who had been working at Hewlett Packard. They worked from their home in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

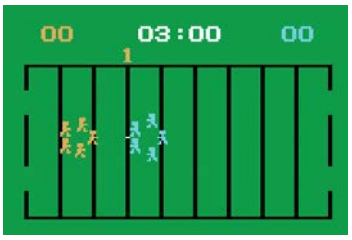
"Working with Linda was actually a non-starter from the first time or two," he laughs. "Initially I would come up with the game idea and start coding but then I'd come up against something that was technically challenging and I'd ask if she would like to do it. I'd then say it needed to be tweaked and that it would be more fun to do it a certain way and she'd be ready to kill me. It wasn't long before I decided I would do all the coding on the games."

"Ed's decision saved the project and the G7000 hit European shelves in 1978. It was also released in the US under the brand, the Magnavox Odyssey 2 although there was little difference between the machines, except for one being PAL and the other NTSC," says William. "When pushed you can add that the G7000 didn't have a power switch but it did end up with the greater number of games."

There was still uncertainty though. By this stage, the original game development group within ▶




» [Videopac G7000] The latter years of the G7000 saw some major releases including *Q*bert*.




» [Videopac G7000] It's not beautiful, but creating games based on sports had shelf appeal as *Football* proved.

## ESSENTIAL GAMES

Don't buy a Videopac G7000 unless you plan to own the following classics



### K.C. MUNCHKIN

■ Created to tap into the *Pac-Man* craze sweeping the arcades, *K.C. Munchkin* came to the attention of Atari which promptly sued. The game plays in a similar fashion to *Pac-Man* with the action taking place within multiple mazes. As such, K.C. is pursued by monsters as he tries to gobble a handful of moving pellets but there were some neat additions such as being able to produce your own maze. The fact it was pulled makes it one to be played via emulation.



### TURTLES

■ As one of the earliest licensed coin-op ports for the G7000 (and an exclusive one at that), *Turtles* is an addictive maze game starring a well-animated turtle. Players are tasked with picking up baby turtles one at a time and returning them to their home while trying to avoid deadly beetles which are out for the kill. While the enemy can be stunned by mines, they recover quickly, making for a relentless chase. Try the US version since it makes use of The Voice synthesiser.



### KILLER BEES

■ From the surprisingly authentic bee sounds to the imaginative, deep and involving gameplay, you wouldn't have felt stung if you'd bought this game back in the day. For not only are you expected to kill a gang of dastardly enemy Beebots by hovering your swarm of white bees over them for a set period of time, you have to avoid the coloured bees which seek to protect them. Should they clash, you lose some of your swarm, making it less effective. It's bee-autiful.



### PICKAXE PETE

■ There is something of a *Donkey Kong* feel to *Pickaxe Pete*, given it involves moving from one platform to another, climbing ladders and trying hard to avoid being hit by rolling boulders that appear from what looks like a revolving door at the top of the screen. It is also just as hard as the Nintendo classic, if not more so, given that you have just one life and nothing more than a pickaxe to hand to knock the boulders away, We wonder where that idea came from, *Jumpman*?



### ATTACK OF THE TIMELORD

■ With some lovely voice sounds and slick *Space Invaders* gameplay, *Attack Of The Timelord* is an addictive shooter of the leave-your-brain-at-the-door variety. It's simple enough with players firing shots from a cannon at the bottom of the screen as the enemy ships swirl in attractive patterns from the centre of the screen. The game was called *Gerry Anderson's Terrahawks* when it was released in Europe in an attempt to cash in on the British TV sci-fi series of the same name.



▶ Magnavox had been disbanded and Sam Overton had left. Ed was working on a royalty basis and he was the only person writing games for the system. This situation continued for two years with Ed trying his hardest to keep up with the vastly larger teams writing games at Atari. Not that he was complaining: "I got zero up front but the games always sold out," he says.

Indeed, he soon got into the swing of things, reusing the bulk of the code from one game to the next to speed up the development process. "It was pretty exciting and there was no downtime that's for sure," Ed says of the volume of work (he would eventually go on to write 24 G7000 games – around half of those released). And yet still Philips and Magnavox were unconvinced and the axe continued to loom.

It was only when Ed created *K.C. Munchkin* that attitudes within NAP changed. The game was very much inspired by *Pac-Man* and the powers-that-be were excited. "There was a feeling of, 'Oh my goodness, we can do a game better than the arcade and blow everyone out of the water,'" Ed says. "That was a true adrenalin rush for the corporate people who saw something they would understand."

The manufacturer began to put more resources into the system but Ed had a nagging doubt. He feared that the development may be on rocky ground even though it differed somewhat from the arcade classic by having some neat twists such as the random generation of maps and a rotating regeneration box for the ghosts (or monsters as they became). It was released in 1981 and gamers were snapping up the machine specifically to play it.

"The sales suddenly meant that they weren't going to quit making the console as soon as they could," Ed recalls. But then disaster struck. "Atari said, 'You can't do that, we're going to get you,'" he continues. "The first federal judge ruled in Philips' favour that there was no patent or copyright infringement but the appellant court was presented with information in a way that I would not have chosen to do it and Philips lost."

**From a major high, *K.C. Munchkin* ended up dealing a devastating blow. "It put Philips** off," says Ed. "They didn't see it coming and they thought all of their lawyers were good and solid and that there was no way Atari would win this. I was going to deviate further and further from *Pac-Man* than *K.C. Munchkin* ended up being but they said come closer, closer, as close as you can. They were totally blindsided in terms of the law and it shook them to the core."

Surprisingly, it did not spell the end for the console or, indeed, for *K.C.*. Another game, *K.C. Crazy Chase* (or *K.C. Krazy Chase* as it was in the US) followed. "I did that game because K.C. was my character and I wanted it on the record that it was not *Pac-Man*," says Ed who has since revitalised his creation with *KC Returns* for Windows 8 and 10 (it's out now on the Window Store).

But then K.C. had breathed new life into the console and the new wave of gamers were snapping up other games in the machine's catalogue, enjoying the likes of *Take the Money And Run*, *Math-A-Magic*, *War Of Nerves*, *Invaders from Hyperspace*, *Dynasty* and *Pocket Billiards* to *Monkeyshines*, *Pick Axe Pete*, *Freedom Fighters* and *Power Lords*.

"About 50 games were released during the console's commercial life in the US and about 70 in Europe," Cassidy says. "Several of them were edutainment games, and most of the sports titles for the system weren't very good but once you discarded those, you were left with a fairly small number of fun games – and those games were really fun!"

In 1982, the G7000 was given a further boost. A bespoke speech synthesiser unit, fittingly called 'The Voice', was released in the United States ( us Europeans got a chess module instead). It was powered by a General Instruments speech chip and it fitted over the cartridge slot of the G7000 console to allow more than 100 words to be spoken.

"The people over in the engineering group knew we had to add something new to the console and The Voice was incredible; state-of-the-art wow," says Ed. "Roberto is the man who needs accolades for that because The Voice may have had a limited vocabulary but it showed what could be done with speech in games. I thought it was way cool."

> **"The people in the engineering group knew we had to add something to the console and The Voice was incredible"**
> Ed Averett



» Can you guess what the first Videopac game was? Answers on a postcard please.

## MASTER STRATEGY

**One of the strengths of the Philips Videopac G7000 was the *Master Strategy* series, which was created in 1981. It brought together board and videogames and the first release, *Quest Of The Rings*, was particularly well-received.**

**Designed by Stephen Lehner and Ronald Bradford, the games not only made great use of the keyboard but they came complete with plastic and metal playing pieces, instruction manuals and game boards. *Quest Of The Rings* was a two-player co-op game which pitted players in a dungeon packed with monsters. It was influenced, obviously, by the *Lord Of The Rings* trilogy.**

**Two more games in the series were released – *Conquest Of The World* and *The Great Wall Street Fortune Hunt* – but another, *Sherlock Holmes*, was shelved. But how did they come about? "The concept was literally born on the back of a napkin," says Ed Averett who programmed all but *Sherlock Holmes* which was created by Ed Friedman.**

**"Myself and Mike Staup, who was the vice president in charge of Magnavox, were having dinner and discussing how to enhance the graphics because they were a real problem and we were running out of runway. We thought, 'What if we combined board games with the programability of the videogame?' The more we played around with it, the more we liked it."**









» The keyboard isn't the best and it certainly takes a sizeable amount of time to get used to.

**Voice-activated games such as *Attack Of The Timelord, Sid The Spellbinder* and *Type & Tell*** worked with the unit and while the resulting sound was rather robotic, it became a hit. It played the audio through its own speaker rather than through the television which allowed for independent volume controls. And as if to show Philips' commitment, The Voice was advertised on television and in magazines in the US by a an older, grey-haired character called the *Wizard Of Odyssey* that the company's marketing team had introduced in the latter part of 1982. Money was finally being spent.

Third-party developers were also producing games for the console. Imagic released *Atlantis* and *Demon Attack*, JoPac produced *Exojet* and *Moto-Crash* and Parker Brothers sold versions of *Frogger*, *Spider-Man*, *Q*bert* and *Super Cobra* thanks to the UK-based Amazon Systems reverse engineering the G7000.

A new development team headed by a returning Sam Overton was also formed. He led other skilled coders to produce a new wave of great games. Bob Harris wrote *Killer Bees* and Jim Butler coded *Turtles*. Jake Dowding and Andy Eltis programmed *Norseman*.

The console was even entering new markets. The G7000 was released as the Odyssey in Brazil where consoles could not be imported but where Philips had a factory. It was also sold in Japan. Yet all of this happened at the end of the machine's life as the North American videogame crashed loomed in 1983.

That left Ed frustrated because he believes the console still had a lot of unrealised potential, not least because of its more complex graphics chip. "I always felt I was working with a high performance sports car and Atari was operating with a good Volkswagen. It gave me a tremendous advantage because I had superior processing power and graphics that were significantly superior to our rivals."

Even so, he acknowledges its restrictions. After all, gamers scorned the machine for falling back on similar, yet plain-looking graphics. "Most of the early games relied on a built-in 64-character set for graphics, giving them all a similar appearance," explains Cassidy.

"We had RAM and ROM restrictions," Ed admits (4K ROMS were introduced for the *Challenger Series* of games which boasted better graphics). "There wasn't much memory to work with and the graphics had huge limitations. There were no tools, characters were laid out on grid paper in hexidecimal but that was the price we paid for being at the frontier. I found that on every game I spent 20 to 30 per cent of my time trying to get the last five percent of the code in there. You'd sit there and say, 'I need to get this in there' but there is no room left so you'd figure out what you could cut and snip and squish and then finally get it in there. So that was a huge, huge limitation."

Ed worked on the G7000 for three years: "I knew disaster was around the corner and all on the inside knew… no-one was upgrading their hardware," he says. That said, the console continued to be sold for a few months, only being discontinued on March 20 1984.

Before it was removed from the shelves, it had been joined by some new siblings including the Philips Videopac+ G7400 and a G7200 which was essentially the G7000 with a built-in black and white display. But could it have been more during its own lifetime, especially with more backing in the first two years?

"I think the console was treated fairly, but did it reach its potential? Not even close," says Ed. "But then if Philips had realised what was there, then it would've never have let me do what I did. They took the position they did and didn't care. But I got an opportunity of a lifetime that I wouldn't have had at Atari." *

**Many thanks to William Cassidy for his assistance.** *

## THE STORY CONTINUES…

**Of course, as with many consoles, the story of the G700 continued following its official death.**

**The homebrew scene for the console has exploded in recent years with one coder, René van den Enden, developing an intricate knowledge of the system.**

**"The first-ever homebrew was John Dondzila's *Berzerk* clone *Amok* in 1998," says G7000/Odyssey 2 expert William Cassidy.**

**"But René has been mentoring and advising just about all of the recent homebrew developers. The most prolific developers of recent years have been Marijn Wenting of Revival Studios, Chris Read, and Rafael Cardoso of Brazil.**

**"Just about all homebrews support The Voice, and many of them even support high-resolution mode when played on a Videopac+ G7400 machine."**

**Check out the forums over at at videopac.nl to find out more.**




» [Videopac G7000] Less a game and more something to play around with, *Type & Tell* was able to use the G7000 add-on, The Voice.

# Future Classic

*Modern games you'll still be playing in years to come*




» **Featured System:** PSP
» **Year:** 2005
» **Publisher:** Sony Computer Entertainment
» **Developer:** Bigbig Studios
» **Key People:** Tomas Chris Whiteside (designer), Richard Jacques (composer)

### GO DEEPER

» **The success of *Pursuit Force* resulted in Sony's acquisition of Bigbig Studios in 2007; the studio closed in 2012.**

» **The soundtrack was recorded by the Slovak National Symphony Orchestra, and the theme was later remixed for the sequel *Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice*.**




»[PSP] Leaping from vehicle to vehicle is the staple of *Pursuit Force*'s gameplay – you'll do this a lot.

# 52. PURSUIT FORCE

***Bigbig Studios' debut videogame brought big-screen action scenes to Sony's first small-screen machine, and we think you'll be playing it for years to come. Nick Thorpe revisits one of his favourite games…***

### THE BACKGROUND

When you're introducing a new piece of hardware to the market, you need some impressive titles to go with it – and in the case of PSP, that need was even greater. Despite having dominated the home console market for close to a decade, Sony was an underdog again thanks to the bold decision to compete with Nintendo, the undisputed king of handhelds. However, the upstart manufacturer had the more powerful machine and in games like *Pursuit Force*, could easily demonstrate it. Developed by the previously unknown Bigbig Studios, a team founded by former Codemasters staff, *Pursuit Force* took the phrase 'cut to the chase' literally by focusing an entire game on vehicle chases. With the PSP's unprecedented 3D capabilities, the game was designed to provide breathtaking cinematic action scenes like nothing ever seen on a handheld before. The game itself casts you as a member of the *Pursuit Force*, a police unit intended to deal with the five major gangs of Capital State by way of vehicular pursuit, interception and – if necessary – deadly force. You'll encounter the Capelli mafia family and the ex-military Warlords to begin with, later missions include the prison escapees, the Convicts, the thieving Vixens and the Asian crime outfit Killer 66. If you can take them all down, you'll have done your job. Of course, jailing these miscreants is easier said than done…

### THE GAME

*Pursuit Force* sees you speeding and shooting your way through Capital State, and has four main gameplay styles. The ones you'll be spending the most time on are the driving sections, which are split between road and river sections – on the road, you'll encounter more traffic and on the water, handling is trickier. Often, these sections involve lots of enemy vehicles, which can be taken out with firearms or by ramming them into submission. However, your officer also has a third option – you can actually commandeer enemy vehicles by leaping from your own and taking out the driver.

The other modes of play you'll encounter less frequently are on foot sections, in which you'll need to gun down or arrest a large contingent of enemies, and helicopter sections in which you use a chain gun to




»[PSP] Your officer will struggle to stay on vehicles as they round corners, requiring D-pad tapping to recover balance.




»[PSP] The on-rails shooting sections in the helicopter are great – be careful not to overheat your gun!




»[PSP] Boss battles provide unique experiences, like avoiding Deadeye's lethal sniper rifle rounds.

## Things of note

### LIVING IN AMERICA



Despite being developed in the UK, the US version of *Pursuit Force* is the one to get thanks to some difficulty adjustments, including the addition of checkpoints.

### GLACIER OF DOOM




There's a definite homage to *Speed* in *Pursuit Force* – the Velocity mission features the Warlords rigging a bus with a bomb, which will detonate if your speed drops for too long.

### BY THE BOOK



Sure, you can gun down your enemies, but when you're on foot it's far better to arrest them. You'll pick up their weapon as a reward, making the stage far easier.

### QUIPLASH




Everyone is mouthy in *Pursuit Force*, from your passengers to the drivers you save. Their frequent speech snippets turn up at the top of the screen similar to a comic book.

### TURN IN YOUR BADGE!




In a game full of clichés, the chief of police is exactly what you'd expect – a loud, mean boss who is worried about the mayor having his ass.

**"We've been tempted to smash the PSP out of anger, only to be lured back every time"**

riddle enemy vehicles with bullets, leaving the flight to your pilot, Sarah Hunter. Each section is very accessible and arcade-inspired, and thankfully the weak link in the chain (the on foot missions) are the last commonly encountered. In many ways, *Pursuit Force* feels like the ultimate high-budget modern spin on *Chase HQ*.

Where *Pursuit Force* really shines is in the variety it offers players. Each stage is a short burst of concentrated action, usually lasting no more than about ten minutes, but they usually feature a variety of sections – it's not uncommon to start in a car, have an on foot showdown and then give chase in a boat to close the stage out. What's more, the game packs in just about every idea possible – as well as standard things like beating the clock and destroying enemy vehicles, you'll be challenged to tail someone at a safe distance, protect allied vehicles, evade a sniper, capture enemy vehicles that can't be shot and much more.

However, it's worth noting that *Pursuit Force* is hard – we've been tempted to smash the PSP out of anger, only to be lured back every time. Each of the game's 30 missions is a challenge just to complete, and your performance is graded after each stage, so earning the A rank for each mission will take some dedication. That said, doing so will earn you additional unlockables such as time trial races and cheats, so it's worth the effort.

Capping off the package, *Pursuit Force*'s production values are excellent. It delivers on the PSP's promise by providing the feel of a big-budget console production, thanks to its great visuals and short but effective cutscenes. The audio is also excellent, as gang members taunt you and your chief shouts orders down the radio. Even better, an incredible orchestral soundtrack by Richard Jacques captures the action blockbuster feel, building on his classic work on *Headhunter*.

### WHY IT'S A FUTURE CLASSIC

With the PSP so often playing host to series that started out on Sony's home consoles, it's easy to think of the likes of *Ridge Racer*, *God Of War*, *Tekken* and *WipEout* as defining titles. However, we'd argue that *Pursuit Force* is the system's signature franchise – the game stands out as a handheld exclusive that truly shows off the strengths of the hardware. The short-burst gameplay is ideally suited to the portable format, while the high production values show just how far ahead of the game the PSP was in terms of power. What's more, the game is an unashamed arcade thrill ride of the kind rarely seen these days. You might see death-defying vehicle leaps in the most action-packed moments of the *Uncharted* games, but those are very modern and cinematic games. *Pursuit Force* is delightfully old-school – it's got a flimsy plot, awesome action and high scores. Sure, it's not easy, but being a hero never is. Get the game, clean up the state and make the precinct proud. ✱



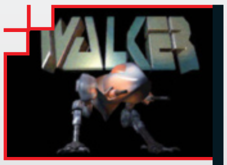

»[PSP] Free-roaming on foot shooting is fun, but deadly auto-aim and fiddly controls mar the experience.




»[PSP] You'll often have to protect police and civilian vehicles, and they're not too durable.

# WALKER

**Developed by the Scottish software house behind Lemmings and Grand Theft Auto, as sci-fi shoot-'em-ups go, Walker was anything but pedestrian. Mike Bevan talks to designers Ian Dunlop and Neill Glancy**

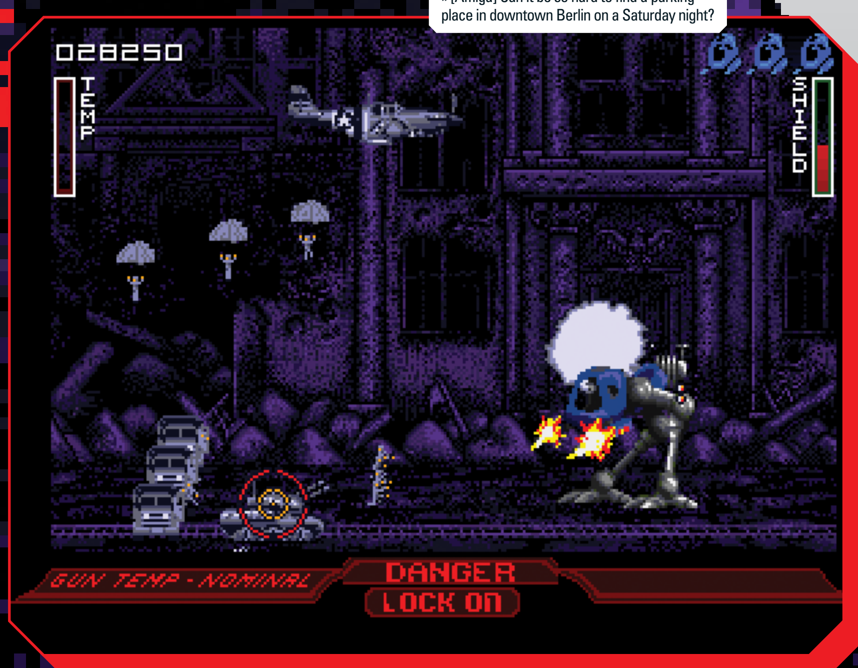


## IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** Psygnosis
- » **DEVELOPER:** DMA Design
- » **RELEASED:** 1993
- » **PLATFORM:** Amiga
- » **PLATFORM:** Shoot-'em-up

**There's a moment near the beginning of *Walker* as our plucky mechanised killing machine enters war-torn** Berlin circa 1944. Planes fly overhead dropping tiny paratroopers that drift slowly down the screen, chucking the occasional grenade your way. Until, that is, you let rip with your 30mm calibre cannons on their canopies and they plummet to earth with an unedifying splat. It's the first of many violently absurdist little touches in a game that pits a 40-foot cross between ED-209 and a giant robot chicken against hordes of hopelessly outgunned ant-like troops through past, present and future combat zones. "I blame Paul Verhoeven," laughs programmer Ian Dunlop, citing the less than subtle Dutch director of *Robocop* and *Total Recall*. Like two other famous products of Dundee-based developer DMA Design – *Lemmings* and *Grand Theft Auto* – *Walker* is a game with a warped sense of humour and a massive body count. An Amiga exclusive, its graphic carnage and detailed animation made for a memorably apocalyptic romp that stood out in the ranks of Nineties 16-bit shooters. "I was looking for contract work in 1990 and found myself at DMA Design talking to David Jones and Scott Johnson among other people," remembers Ian, explaining the genesis of the game. "They were pushing some tech that Scott had come up with. He had modelled a 3D texture mapped 'Walker head' (using 3D software he wrote) and this allowed him to render it out in different orientations. This was quite unique at the time. Those 3D frames/positions were subsequently turned into sprites which gave the *Walker* its unique ability to look around the pseudo-3D environment. So, the conversation went something

» [Amiga] Can it be so hard to find a parking place in downtown Berlin on a Saturday night?





» [Amiga] This train is completely harmless, but hey… it's probably carrying Nazi gold bullion or something.



» [Amiga] Walker pilots laugh at your primitive and flammable Zeppelin technology.



» [Amiga] The LA levels have a definite air of *Terminator 2* about them.

like this: 'Hey, let's create this cool side-scrolling shoot-'em-up featuring this Walker character that Scott has made.' That was literally the entire vision."

"I'm not sure they even expected a game out of me," confides Ian. "I was a single developer working contractually for £500 a month. At the time that felt like a lot of money but looking back on it, it was a very risk-free proposition for DMA Design. I couldn't complain as it was great working for DMA and I did eventually get a salaried job out of it at the end." However it took the skills of an external artist, Neill Glancy, in tandem with Ian, to fully flesh out the *Walker* universe. "I worked in a computer shop in Scotland selling games and hardware," recalls Neill. "Ian was a customer and we would chat about games. He had been working on *Walker* for a while but felt the graphics could be better. I had been working on pixel art games and projects for some years so offered to create an entire set of level graphics for the game.

"These were the most complex pixel graphics I had ever made with motion blur and dynamic lighting and shadows. *Terminator* was a big influence on the style as was *Akira* in the work I did for the project. Ian installed the graphics and was thrilled… they looked really cool and the little men were a tad bigger and easier to see die! Ian took this build to DMA to show Dave Jones." But although Jones was impressed, because Neill was not an official DMA employee some of his work for *Walker* was curtailed for alternative designs by the in-house art department. "During development I would hang out with Neill and we would always play games and discuss game development," explains Ian. "Neill was great at bouncing ideas off of and getting great feedback. He even created a unique vision for the art of the game based on some of *Terminator*, but unfortunately I couldn't get DMA to use his artwork due to office politics. But I did my best to get the art team working on *Walker* to adopt some of Neill's stuff – so it sort of made it in there."

**One obvious similarity that *Walker* shares with DMA's popular *Lemmings* franchise** are the tiny animated 'stick man' characters which in both games display a desire to bite the dust in the most irresponsible ways possible. Whether running towards your gigantic murderbot only to get mown down by machine gun fire, shooting from buildings or attacking on jet packs or hang-gliders, their average life expectancy is somewhere on a scale of nanoseconds. "I think the scale of the game that DMA had envisioned, given the size of the Walker, called for small enemies," admits Ian. "It wasn't something I thought about for a long time given the 'size' of the *Walker* and being exposed to *Lemmings*…"

"We really enjoyed 'pixel mischief'," chuckles Neill. "And *Lemmings* showed us that doing sick things to little sprite ▶



## WALKER 101

■ *Walker* puts you in the pilot seat of a bipedal killing machine with an uncanny resemblance to a giant metal chicken. Equipped with a *Terminator*-style time drive the Walker must fight through four distinct levels – Berlin 1944, Los Angeles 2019, The Middle East of the present day, and the Great War of 2420. Along the way you'll be attacked by scores of tiny troops and their puny war machines. Unusually for a 2D action game, *Walker* uses a mouse-controlled targeting system for precision carnage.

"Terminator was a big influence on the style as was Akira in the work I did for the project"
Ian Dunlop

# MIGHTY MECHS

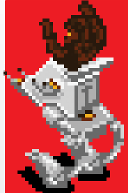
**Seven assorted robo-warriors from alternative mecha-themed videogames**

## ASSAULT SUIT



■ A rugged and versatile combat mech fighting for the Pacific States Marine Corps in Konami's *Cybernator*, or *Assault Suits Valken* as it was known in Japan. The Assault Suit is well-armoured and can be equipped with rocket boosters for space flight.

## AT-ST



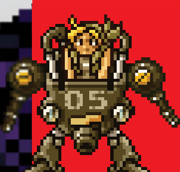
■ The not-so-mighty scout walker from the *Star Wars* saga is possibly the only mech to be defeated by small furry teddy bears. Also, in the *Return Of The Jedi* arcade game you get to pilot your own stolen AT-ST as Chewbacca. Just mind out for those logs…



## CYBERBOT

■ Debuting in Capcom's beat-'em-up *Armoured Warriors*, these brawling machines later got their own spin-off, *Cyberbots: Full Metal Madness*. There's an impressive range choose from including this tank-like creation, Guldin.

## SLUGANOID



■ This beast appears in *Metal Slug 2* as our heroes enter an Egyptian tomb. Equipped with twin machine guns and a powerful cannon, it's great for taking out the boss found at the end of the level.

## WANZER



■ The main hardware of Squaresoft's *Front Mission* series, these mecha derive from the German word wanderpanzer or 'walking armour'. Endlessly customisable, they fight alongside standard military vehicles.

## TIMBER WOLF



■ Probably the most iconic vehicle from the *MechWarrior* videogame series, this mean-looking mech carries a deadly arsenal of machine guns, lasers and shoulder mounted long-range missiles and is the weapon of choice for most Clan Wolf pilots.

## TITAN



■ Drawing on decades of design across videogames, the signature moment of *Titanfall* comes when your colossal charge comes crashing down and your view changes from on foot to the controls of a giant mech.







▶creatures was fun and funny! Pixel animation was a very time consuming process, though… In the research and development work I did on the game I also baked in lighting and shadows into frames of animation as well as motion blur. This was quite unheard of at the time as most games when a gun went off you just saw a muzzle flash. Now when the muzzle flashed it illuminated the shooter as well as the ground he was standing on and cast his shadow behind him. This work was heavily inspired by *Akira*. Unfortunately it didn't make it into the final game as it would have been too much work to overhaul all the prior content that was already in place. Although this was a bit crushing it had a silver lining as Dave Jones hired me as a designer. From there I went on to work on [the unreleased] *Walker 2* as well as a music game proposal for the newly-minted Rockstar Games."



» [Amiga] This tank was a stumbling block for many players. Hint: take out its tracks as soon as you can.

Compared with many other scrolling Amiga shoot-'em-ups *Walker* stood out in offering a unique control system combining a mouse-controlled gun reticule and keyboard or joystick control over movement of your mech's body. It was also unusual in using backgrounds scrolling from left to right, against the grain of the traditional arcade style shooter. "I wanted to allow the player to have full freedom to shoot anywhere on the screen, but at the same time move the Walker," Ian explains. "It worked without the need for any joystick peripherals. I think it also gave the gameplay a bit more depth and interest. I like adding layers




» [Amiga] Watch out for jets dropping napalm…



» [Amiga] Mobile missile launchers and A10 Thunderbolts can be very bad news.




» [Amiga] Oh no! The Walker makes a cameo appearance in *Lemmings 2: The Tribes*.

of detail like that. That's why you could also lock-on to enemies. Regarding the scrolling, I seem to remember that the Walker orientations were only ever rendered facing from right to left and somewhat remember Dave Jones saying that he wanted it to be different. I do recall getting some tips from Dave and one of the other programmers on how to do efficient full-screen scrolling; something they had used on *Menace*."

Ian also tells us about the additional sections of the game that were later dropped due to time restrictions. "There was an underground platform section that was basically my rip-off of *Prince Of Persia* albeit featuring guns," he says. "The idea was that at the end of each *Walker* level you got out of the cockpit and went into an underground base. There were four parts to an explosive charge that you had to plant in key locations on different floors accessed via an elevator. Along the way you jumped across gaps, shot bad guys and placed the explosives. When the last explosive was placed you had a small fixed amount of time to escape. It was canned because while it was fully functional, it was all programmer art and Psygnosis wanted the game out quickly because of piracy and sales fears and didn't want to invest the money to get artists to finalise all the artwork – which was quite considerable."

**W*alker* was also one of the last games released by Psygnosis that supported** basic Amiga models, although those with memory upgrades got a little bonus. "If you had more memory you got full speech between the Walker and HQ," says Neill. "This was recorded between Ian and me over walkie-talkies…" By the end of the project Neill was heavily involved in the layout of the game for the last two eras, the Middle East and futuristic 2420 levels, while Ian concentrated on enemy AI. Admittedly it's possible that some players will never have seen these last two levels, at least not without cheating. "I think the consensus was the game was too hard," confesses Neill. "But the classic design problem was offering enough challenge so you didn't blow through the content too fast. The game didn't have many levels so the difficulty ramp was quite steep. Now with the notion of difficulty levels and casual play it would be very different. Back then there wasn't a formal notion of Q&A. You just sort of banged away on the game as much as you could as a team but it wasn't as organised or structured as it is now."

Ian reveals that plans were also in place for a console conversion of *Walker*. "After launch I started doing an initial port to the Mega Drive. I didn't get very far, though. It was cancelled soon after I started and I left DMA Design soon after that to work at Iguana Entertainment UK. About the same time I started work on the *Walker* Mega Drive port Neill was hired to direct work on *Walker 2* [see boxout]. That project was ultimately shelved as well." Neill later followed Ian to Iguana, developing the SNES platformer *Zero The Kamikaze Squirrel* and working as a lead designer on the 1998 *South Park* videogame. Ian's credits at Iguana include the first two *Turok* titles, before making a move to Ion Storm in Texas where his projects included *Deus Ex: Invisible War* and *Thief: Deadly Shadows*. His recent developments include *Contra 4* and *Konductra* on the Nintendo DS. As for DMA Design, after producing the first two *GTA* games the company closed its Dundee office, moved to Edinburgh, and became Rockstar North. The rest, of course, is history. But we've yet to see any 40-foot mechs rampaging through Liberty City. And that's a pity, we say. *




» [Amiga] Shades of *R-Type* in the final boss perhaps?



## DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

**MENACE**
**SYSTEM:** Amiga
**YEAR:** 1988

**LEMMINGS** (PICTURED)
**SYSTEM:** Amiga
**YEAR:** 1991

**GRAND THEFT AUTO**
**SYSTEM:** PC, PSone
**YEAR:** 1997




» *Walker*'s moody futuristic cover artwork set the tone for the game nicely.

## WALKER 2

**Shortly after *Walker* was completed Neill Glancy was recruited by DMA to work on a sequel, which sadly never saw commercial release. However Neill still has much of the original concept art, some of which we present here. "We mainly wanted to fix a lot of the shortcomings of the first game namely lack of weapon variety," Neill tells us. "In addition we planned to completely overhaul the visual quality to incorporate some research work I had done on the game. We were looking at the 3DO system because it used CD-ROMs and we wanted to stream the game's stage backgrounds off the disc. The sequel was planned to have a customisable Walker 'frame' and players would earn money from performing missions. As the player earned money they could upgrade their base facilities and capabilities. Enemies would have been far more competent and interesting to attack, and elaborate boss battles as well as a complex story was envisioned. Several new parallaxing technologies were also researched and we planned more movement between screen layers as well as a feature called the 'turntable battle system'. *Walker 2*'s design was fascinating, very ahead of its time and had many elements we see in modern games. When I left DMA to move to the States the game kind of came with me I suppose. I would still love to make it one day if someone has several million dollars to spare!"**











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CLASSIC MOMENTS

# Virtua Cop

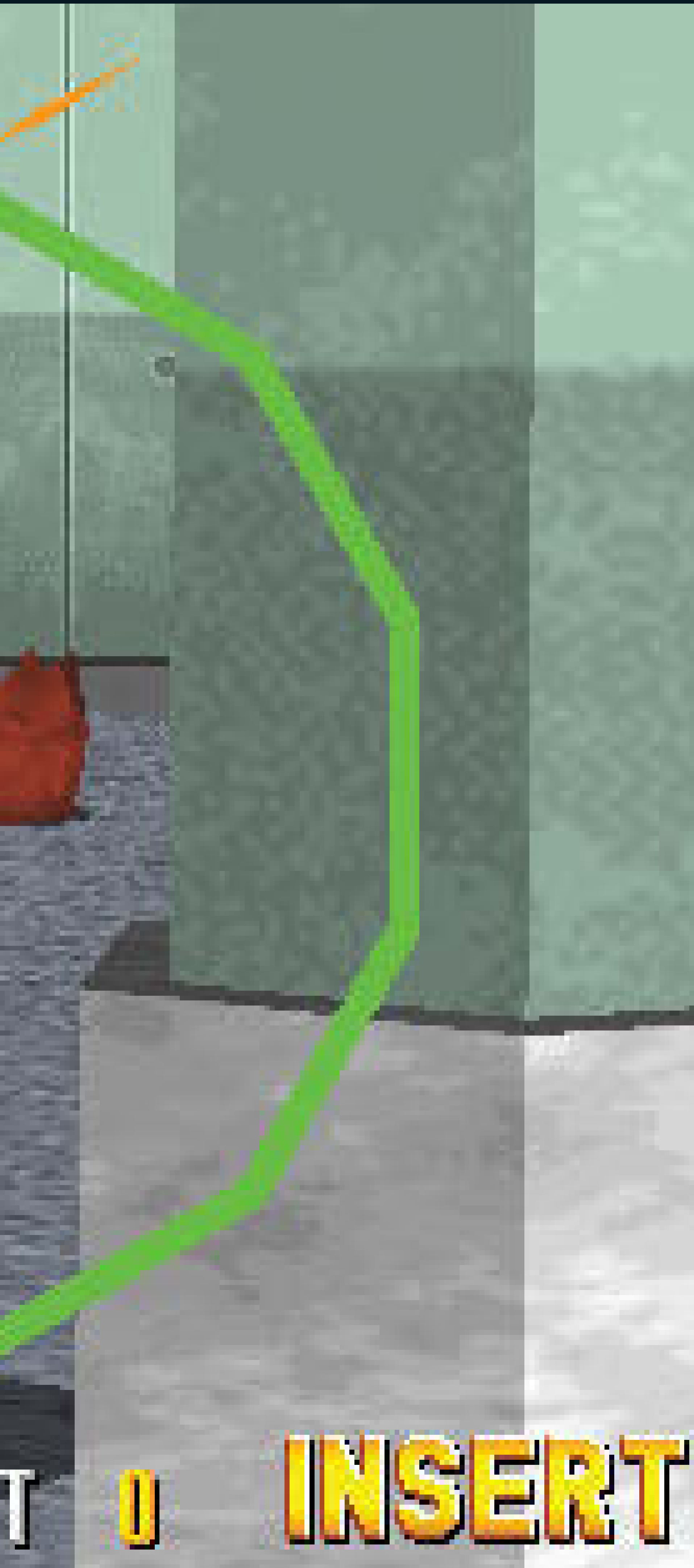
» **PLATFORM:** ARCADE » **DEVELOPER:** SEGA AM2 » **RELEASED:** 1994

As a firearms officer, you always have to be careful in the line of duty. While you're able to use lethal force, you'd much rather see criminals brought to justice than taken to the morgue, but a single moment of hesitation is all that stands between you and a dirt nap. Master marksmen can shoot to disarm, a technique known as the Justice Shot – one which knocks a weapon from the gunman's hand, rather than killing them. If you can demonstrate the quick and precise aim required to deliver consistent Justice Shots, you'll earn the respect of everyone in the precinct.

For the player, the Justice Shot is a key part of *Virtua Cop*'s excellent scoring system. Each one you land is worth a massive 5,000 points, much more than can be achieved even with multiple shots on any other part of a criminal. What's more, if you can keep taking out enemies without getting hit, your score multiplier will send that total skyward and help you claim top scores. *

## BIO

As the 3D arms race transformed the arcade scene in the early-Nineties, an increasing number of genres experienced their first brush with polygonal graphics – and for lightgun games, that first encounter was *Virtua Cop*. Sega's famed AM2 department handled development and made great use of the new technology, with excellent animations and a camera that could pan to find off-screen baddies and zoom in to distant targets. The game's success spawned two sequels, as well as home conversions to the Saturn and PC, a remake on PS2 and an aborted N-Gage version.




# MORE CLASSIC VIRTUA COP MOMENTS

## Hands Up



The first boss that you'll encounter is Kong, an utter maniac with a rocket launcher. He's not too tough to fight – he is the first boss, after all – but he is a bit sneaky. Once he's realised that he's fighting a losing battle, he'll hold his hands up and surrender – only to betray your trust by pulling out a handgun and taking one final shot at victory.

## Constructive Dismissal



The bad guys *really* want you dead. How badly do they want you dead? So badly that in the second stage, they're quite happy to give up on guns and turn to the nearby construction equipment as weaponry. This criminal has just smacked your head with an excavator – we're all for creative assault, but we just can't dig that.

## Staring Down The Barrel



Rule number one of lightgun games: if there is an angry-looking red barrel sitting in the background, it's probably worth unloading a couple of rounds into it to see what happens. As luck would have it, *Virtua Cop*'s oil drums are as explosive – as you'd expect – and their effect on bad guys is hilarious, sending them flying into the air.

## You're A Loose Cannon!



You and your partner are the good guys, right? Maybe so, but once you've started your assault on EVL Corporation's headquarters, trying to play it by the books will land you in a body bag. That's probably why grabbing a machine gun and mercilessly gunning down a wave of sharp-suited criminals feels so good – even if the chief wouldn't approve!

# RADIATING QUALITY

## THE LEGACY OF HALF-LIFE

It's been almost 20 years since Half-Life was originally released, and its aftershocks are still being felt to this day. Ian Dransfield takes a look back at the legacy of one of gaming's true greats

**Good games are common. Great games come every now and then. True classics are rare. But what about** those games that revolutionise a genre, changing how we play our games forever? Yeah, they're not exactly ten a penny, and *Half-Life* just happened to be one of those games.

It's easy to go back to a game so universally lauded as *Half-Life* is to look at it through a modern lens. Graphically, it hasn't aged too well. It's riddled with illogical puzzles and genuinely bad platforming sections. The AI isn't the all-powerful, truly clever system of routines and algorithms we were led to believe back in 1998. But looking at Valve's first ever game in such a negative light is an exercise in futility; an onanistic desire to tear down an icon in order to '*prove*' to the world that it was nothing more than a case of the emperor's new clothes. Because, you see, time has proven *Half-Life* to be a true, genuine, bona fide classic – it changed games forever, and its legacy persists to this day. It still influences, it still enthuses, it still excites – *Half-Life* is still everything we all said it was almost 20 years ago.

Look at what has come since *Half-Life* released in 1998 – look at the motifs; the common themes. See how many games have adopted the 'scenic tour' introductory sequence, whereby a player is shown parts of the game they'll encounter in the future via a partially interactive tram/car/cart ride. Tally up exactly how many games introduced a usually benign tool and turned it into your first weapon, like a crowbar, or a wrench. And lose count at just how many games adopted the storytelling practice of letting everything play out in-game, without immersion-breaking cutscenes. ▶





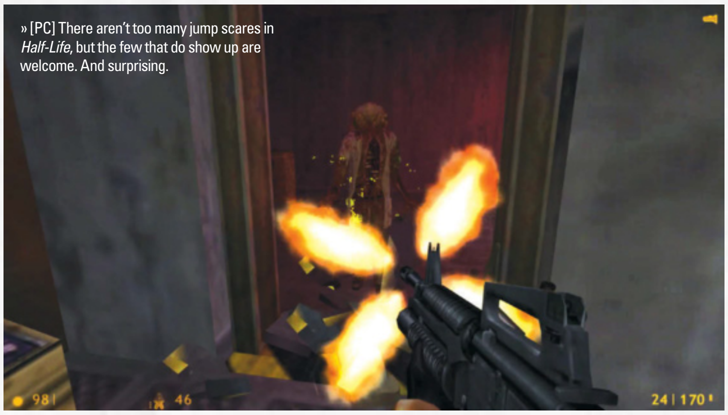
» [PC] Some of the puzzles in *Half-Life* are as simple as hitting a switch. As long as you can find the switch and don't spend 20 minutes running around not seeing it…

"It was obvious to me that there was something special about the game from early on," Steve Theodore, production artist on *Half-Life*, says. "What struck me the most was how good the game was at letting the content people try things out. On my first game (FASA's *MechCommander*) the art for the entire game was essentially done before the engine even ran: in fact I finished my tasks and moved on to another project without ever seeing a single pixel of the running game…

"A lot of what made *Half-Life* so special was the way that we could experiment, try things out, and course correct," Steve continues. "We could discuss an idea in the morning and play test a simple version the same afternoon. That same ability to iterate carried over into *Team Fortress* and *Counter-Strike*, which both benefitted hugely from being tweaked and refined so many times. Nowadays most game teams at least pay lip service to iteration but it was baked into *Half-Life* early on."

**Dario Casali also worked on *Half-Life,* and clarified that Valve did want to shake things up from day one.** "We wanted to bring the genre forward from where it was at the time," he tells us. "We made some progress along several axes of interaction and gameplay immersion so we continued pushing on those aspects – we had pretty high expectations from ourselves about innovating in the genre."

But while the internal aims and eventual impact of *Half-Life* on the world of gaming is something commonly discussed, its impact on other studios – new and old, big and small, indie and big name – is often overlooked. One company got its start through making expansion packs for *Half-Life*, and these days is one of the biggest players in all



» [PC] There aren't too many jump scares in *Half-Life*, but the few that do show up are welcome. And surprising.

"We could experiment, try things out, and course correct"

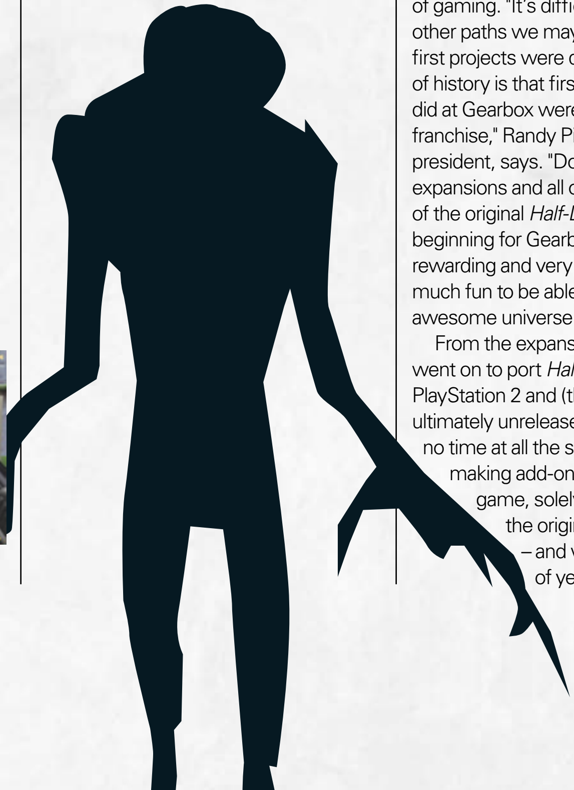
Steve Theodore



» [PC] The many scientists you encounter sometimes have a use, but are usually best used to briefly distract enemies.



» [PC] Just when you think you're safe, the game would drop an alien ambush on you to keep you on your toes.



of gaming. "It's difficult to know what other paths we may have taken if our first projects were different, but the fact of history is that first few projects we did at Gearbox were all in the *Half-Life* franchise," Randy Pitchford, Gearbox president, says. "Doing all of the expansions and all of the console ports of the original *Half-Life* was a perfect beginning for Gearbox – [it was] very rewarding and very stimulating and so much fun to be able to expand such an awesome universe."

From the expansions, Gearbox went on to port *Half-Life* to both PlayStation 2 and (though it was ultimately unreleased) Dreamcast. In no time at all the studio had gone from making add-ons to an existing game, solely on PC, to porting the original game for consoles – and within the next couple of years had made the

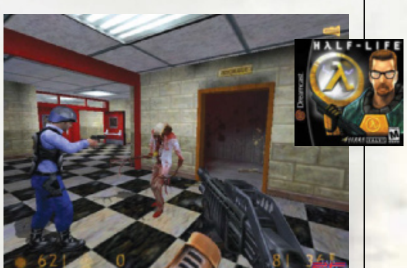
move into developing its own projects. Without *Half-Life*, things might not have been the same for the *Borderlands* and *Brothers In Arms* creator.

Even after *Half-Life* had released, the impact it was in the process of having wasn't really being felt. Attention was still half-focused on the competition, like *Sin* and *Daikatana*, with this unknown oddly-named shooter from an equally-unknown developer having to wait until the first wave of reviews hit before people really started paying attention. Even those working at Valve had little idea *Half-Life* was on the cusp of changing everything.

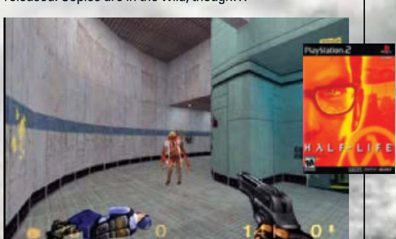
"I never played it through until a couple of weeks after release," Steve remembers. "I was no longer spending 70 hours a week in the office, so I sat down and played the game through from the beginning, with the blinds drawn and the surround-sound speakers on… and I was pretty floored: all the little things I'd seen piecemeal for the last year really came together well, and the flow of the story started to make sense.

"Of course I knew the basic nature of the big reveal at in the beginning of chapter five – I'd even played the top-of-the-shaft firefight – but after actually playing it through, trying to save the Barneys and the Scientists and trying to 'get help,' the awful moment when it becomes obvious that help is not on the way became real to me."

This shows a big reason as to why *Half-Life* turned out so well; why the love that went into its creation was near enough tangible for those who played the game: the people making it were having fun doing so. But aside from ▶



» [Dreamcast] One of many sad stories around Sega's failure, *Half-Life* on Dreamcast was finished but never released. Copies are in the wild, though…



» [PS2] The PS2 port of *Half-Life* did make its way to release and was well-received at the time. The benefit of hindsight shows a fiddly, rather ugly take on the classic.

# UNLIKELY HERO

**Gordon Freeman wasn't your typical protagonist…**



■ The spectacles, straight out of the NHS catalogue, show this man is a great, big nerd. And also a skilled handler of weapons and knower of military tactics, of course.

■ The lambda symbol isn't just a pretty thing to slap on Freeman's suit – it also works nicely as the logo to the game and, in later titles, a symbol of rebellion.

■ When you're going to take on an invading alien race and military cover-up team, what weapon would you bring to that fight? A crowbar, obviously.

■ You'll note that Freeman is alone in this image, as he was for the majority of the original *Half-Life*. Intermittently accompanied by expendable security or scientists, Gordon essentially saved the world by himself.

■ A simple man wouldn't be able to survive what Freeman goes through were it not for the HEV suit he wears. We've always wanted one of these…

■ Generally speaking, Gordon Freeman's design lends itself incredibly well to one aspect of videogames: cosplay. It has to be one of the easiest things for us nerds to dress as.

# COPYCAT OPENINGS

**The games that emulated on Half-Life's iconic introduction**

### BIOSHOCK

■ While *Half-Life*'s train ride was a perfect mix of oddness and banality, *Bioshock* used its 'scenic tour' Bathysphere intro to show off the city in which the entire game takes place. Also it's at the bottom of the ocean. This is a clever and effective way of aping Valve's technique without outright copying it.



### FAR CRY 2

■ A more straightforward derivation of *Half-Life*'s intro, *Far Cry 2* had the player driven around a region of the game's map. This served two purposes: one, to force some exposition down your throat, and two, to show off a few examples of the sorts of places you'd be travelling to.



### HALO 2

■ Where other games might have thought to mix up the vehicle being used for the scenic tour intro, *Half-Life 2* didn't bother: it just put Master Chief in a tram that looked a lot like *Half-Life*'s. Instead of hinting towards what was coming, though, this just served as a cutscene before a big battle.



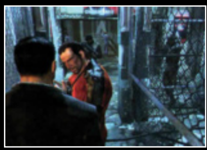
### THE ELDER SCROLLS V: SKYRIM

■ The tram of the medieval fantasy past, also known as the horse and cart, is what *Skyrim* used to begin its tale of snow, swords and s...dragons. Oddly, considering it had so much world to show off, *Skyrim*'s scenic intro didn't actually give the player a broad view of the world around them.



### BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY

■ The *Half-Life* scenic tour intro has also made its way into the likes of this particular Batman game, with the vehicular tour replaced with a walking tour. It's great to see the legacy of such a classic game is passed down through the generations to other, future classic titles.



■ The HL intro even has its own entry on TV Tropes: tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/ScenicTourLevel

▶ that – away from putting in interactive microwaves in which you can nuke a colleagues dinner – there was a ruthless streak to Valve's development of *Half-Life*: playtesting.

"There was plenty of uncertainty to begin with as we experimented with new ideas," Dario explains. "As we progressed, and experiments worked out, we were able to have more successful playtests of individual ideas. Once these ideas started coming together in a single experience, we slowly became more confident with what we had… You can shoot as high as you can and hope that the result of your efforts will be received well. We did obsess over playtesting a bit and we were our own harshest critics. Holding ourselves to high standards meant that we redid or rethought work even when it was painful to do so."

And, fortunately for everyone that was paying attention, Valve was always very open about its processes; about how it approached making *Half-Life* and the tools it used to actually make the game. A portion of the team was made up of *Quake* modders, after all, and this embracing of the modding community meant that – even after *Half-Life* itself was starting to flag in the public's eye – there was still a hell of a lot of activity surrounding the game's excellent modding scene.

"I feel like the extensibility and modability of the *Half-Life* ecosystem was a great thing for games," Steve explains. "Not only did it create the platform for great games like *Counter-Strike* and *Portal*, it also helped break down the barrier between players and game developers: so many of us today got into the scene as 'modders' (just like so many of the *Half-Life* team, like John Guthrie, Dave Riller, and Steve Bond). Besides being the granddaddy of so many story-driven FPS games, I feel like the mod-based ecosystem that *Half-Life* spawned is also a key part of the history of indie games."

***They Hunger, Team Fortress Classic, Day Of Defeat, Natural Selection, Gunman Chronicles*** **– these are names** any self-respecting PC gamer knows; they are *Half-Life* mods most PC owners of a certain age have played. Why wouldn't you? They were free, and they were cool. Valve understood that, releasing modding and creation tools with *Half-Life*, encouraging players to tinker around with its extentive toolkit and helping out the best of the best in whatever way it could.

> "There was plenty of uncertainty to begin with as we experimented with new ideas"
> Dario Casali



» [PC] Boasting a safety record that would make [company name redacted by lawyers] blush, the Black Mesa facility boasts many a radioactive pool.

## MODDED MADNESS The mods that took Half-Life to a new level



### COUNTER-STRIKE

■ It's easy to forget *Counter-Strike* was originally just another *Half-Life* mod. It was so good – so loved – that Valve ended up snapping up the entire project and making it an official project. The rest, as they say, is terrorist-winning history.



### SVEN CO-OP

■ It's good enough that the *Sven* mod added co-op play to *Half-Life*'s campaign, but over the years it's also brought in more scenarios, weapons, systems and enemies to play about with. It's one of the oldest and definitely one of the best, no doubt.



### NATURAL SELECTION

■ Offering a unique spin where many mods just went for more of the same, *Natural Selection*'s 'first-person strategy' was so well-received it spun out into a full-blown sequel in 2012. The original is still one of the most-played mods for *Half-Life*, though.



### TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC

■ It's a bit of a cheat to include a mod created by Valve itself, but *Team Fortress Classic* is a classic game in its own right. The mod eventually received the sequel it deserved in *Team Fortress 2* – aka 'the game that makes Valve millions'.



### THEY HUNGER

■ Before *Half-Life 2* showed us how the series could do horror, *They Hunger* came out and scared the pants out of everyone who played it. Zombies might be done to death by now, but in 1999 it was a new and exciting way to play an FPS.



Again, it's an area that has been talked about a lot in the past, while one point of discussion is often overlooked. That being, the benefit of such an open, welcoming system when it came to others making the official, licensed *Half-Life* products. "I think we were able to do such an insane amount of work with just 10-16 people at Gearbox because Valve did so much heavy lifting in establishing the universe and developing the code and tools," Randy explains. "We were fortunate that some of the folks who were active in the mod community and tools community who did a lot of good stuff for *Half-Life* were actually part of our team and I think that helped a lot, too. If we had to invent the universe, create the game engine and develop all of the content from ground zero, the project would've taken a couple more years and three or four times as many people. It was a perfect project for us as our debut title."

Being so open to the modding community was, once again, an area in which Valve wasn't the pioneer – it just did things a lot better and took advantage of the ever-quickening emergence of the modern internet to spread the word. *Doom*'s WADs and total conversions set the standard, but Valve and *Half-Life*'s take on the tradition, once again, raised the bar. People forged successful careers for themselves; many millions of dollars have been made off the back of making a game that piggybacked off of someone else's work; modern game-making tools are aimed at absolute beginners, so anybody can make a game. And all along the way Valve was there, offering encouragement, giving people a well-deserved pat on the back, and telling them to just go for it.

This was, in part, because of many of the staff at Valve's backgrounds – many coming from the modding community, as mentioned. But it was also because Valve saw games differently to many of the other, established studios around in the late-Nineties. "*Half-Life* tried to be at least a little self-conscious about the evolution of the medium," Steve explains. "Around 20 years ago people would have laughed if you told them that videogames would end up at the Smithsonian – but the *Half-Life* team really did want to make games more than just throwaway toys.

"The rule against cinematics – which made our jobs much harder and also ended up leaving a lot of my favourite work out of the game – was a kind of ideological stake in the ground: we really did want the game and the story to be the same thing. It was far from flawless, but it was really trying to push the boundaries of a young medium. I think Marc Laidlaw and Gabe Newell both deserve huge credit for being willing to do more than was commercially necessary and try something bigger."

**It was a common theme from everyone we spoke to that *Half-Life* would likely not be made in the modern era – at least not in the** traditional manner it was back in the Nineties, with a development team contracted and funded by a big publisher. Even with all of *Half-Life*'s focus testing – another anomaly at the time – and Valve's desire to create something truly special, it's easy to see a publisher bringing down the kibosh on any studio being so… ludicrous with its game making processes these days.

"We alternated between periods of



» [PC] One downfall – literally – of *Half-Life* is the use on more than one occasion of platforming sections. Unless effort is made to change how the controls function, these sections rarely work well.



» [PC] Both the aliens and human soldiers come in a variety of shapes and sizes.

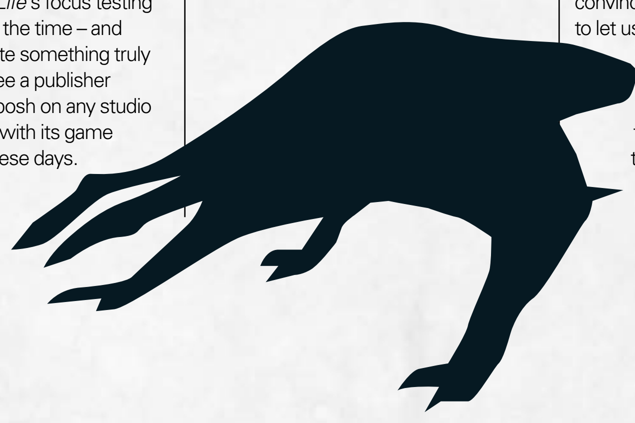


» [PC] Sometimes it seems like you've truly met your match, just remember, though: you're Gordon Freeman.

intense excitement and worry," Steve laughs. "Some aspects of the game were obviously really working well and playing through one of the more polished sections was always exhilarating. Other parts of the game, though, had trouble living up to the big plans.

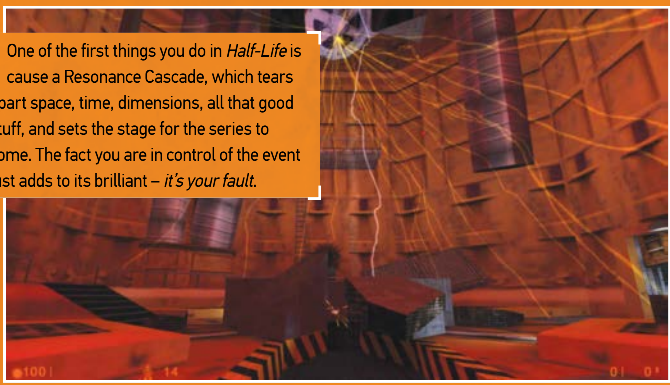
"We had a lot of trouble with the AI for the Ichthyosaur," he continues, "and there were supposed to be more big Gargantua fights that we just could not pull off. Those kinds of things were supremely frustrating. We were pushing pretty hard on ways of alternating between familiar gun-and-grenade gameplay with new kinds of interactive elements that were technically challenging and carried a lot of production risks. It would be hard to convince a 21st century game producer to let us try some of the things we did."

But that's to be expected – game budgets are bigger than ever and the risk of betting the house on just one game is too much for most companies to bear. That's probably why one of the biggest factors ▶



# TEN DEFINING MOMENTS

**The moments which made Half-Life so special**



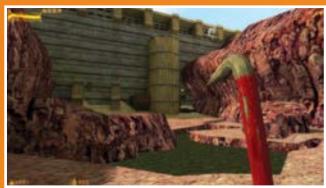
1 One of the first things you do in *Half-Life* is cause a Resonance Cascade, which tears apart space, time, dimensions, all that good stuff, and sets the stage for the series to come. The fact you are in control of the event just adds to its brilliant – *it's your fault.*



2 You see a strange man wandering around and fob it off as nothing, until you realise you're seeing him more and more. Who is this peculiar, suited chap carrying a briefcase and why does he never get assaulted by aliens or soldiers alike?



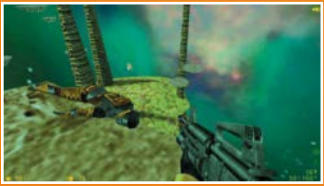
3 Just when you think you are getting a handle on things, when your confidence is rising and you're pretty sure that any challenge put in front of you can be taken down by your mighty, nerdy hand (and crowbar), you encounter this big bugger. And all bets are off.



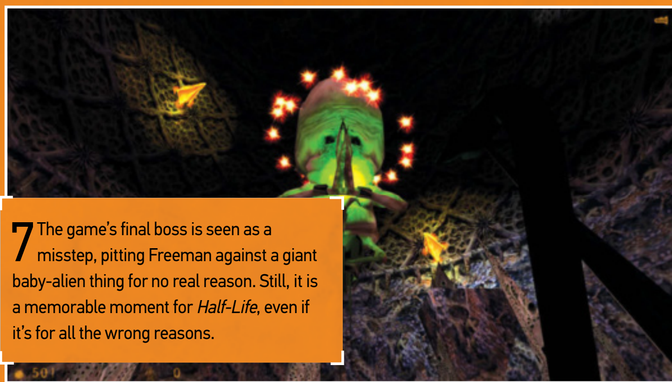
4 It happens a few times through the game, but the first occasion on which Freeman emerges from the darkness into the New Mexico wilderness is liberating and terrifying. One, you're out of the confines of Black Mesa, but two, you're in the middle of nowhere – there's no escape.



5 With confusion reigning and death snapping at your heels, reaching the Lambda Complex should come as sweet relief. This section of the Black Mesa complex explains a lot about what's been going on there in the past, as well as giving Freeman the Gluon Gun.



6 Just as you think you know everything *Half-Life* is going to throw at you, it switches things up again and you end up in Xen. Here you have to relearn some techniques, like jumping, and the game takes on a whole other atmosphere.



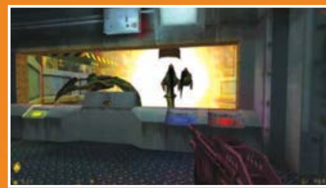
7 The game's final boss is seen as a misstep, pitting Freeman against a giant baby-alien thing for no real reason. Still, it is a memorable moment for *Half-Life*, even if it's for all the wrong reasons.



8 When the aliens arrive, you're worried. When the humans arrive, you think you're saved – but they're here to kill all witnesses. When you realise that your enemies aren't on the same side and, in fact, will fight each other given half a chance, you get some confidence back.

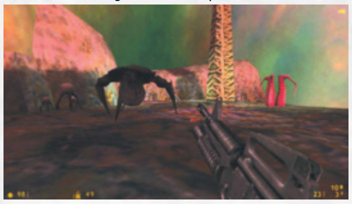


9 *Half-Life* goes full circle in its ending, taking Freeman back to the tram system – only this time accompanied by G-Man and offered a choice: step through this teleporter, or face an impossible battle. We chose the latter first time around. It was the wrong choice.



10 This bastard is the bane of many players' lives when they encounter it – it's impossible to damage with weapons, it splats you should you make too much noise and is *really scary.* The relief that comes when you blast it with the rocket engines though… it's blissful.

» [PC] It's about this point where you realise *Half-Life*, classic as it is, has gone off the deep end.



» [PC] We do wonder sometimes how one average joe scientist guns down a small army of trained soldiers.



▶ in *Half-Life*'s legacy is that nothing else has been quite so assured, so confident, so *different*. Maybe *Deus Ex*, maybe elements of *Modern Warfare*'s campaign, maybe even the shift to console shooters introduced by *Halo* – but broadly speaking, nothing has come close outside of the *Half-Life* name.

Yet it all seems so simple when you boil it down: "What *Half-Life* did was build a unique world and narrative that was just more cohesive and internally consistent than what we had usually experienced before it," Randy muses. "From a narrative point of view, it was genius – it took the basic *Doom* plot and made it full and real and rich in a whole new way.

"I mean, it wasn't so much that *Half-Life* did things that hadn't been done before," he continues. "It's that it did a lot of things very, very well in ways that worked harmoniously together… Meanwhile, the most significant elements of the game and the areas of the game that were important to have the most impact for players were the areas where there was the most polish. That the original team learned how to prioritize their quality control around the parts of the game that mattered most to players was not something common to development back then."

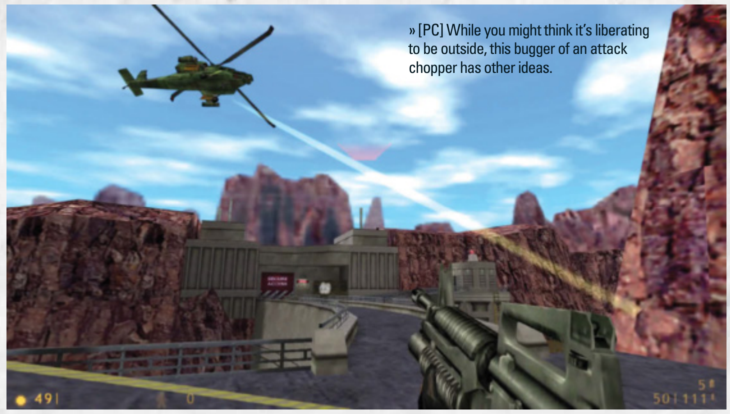
**Now, of course, things are laser-focused on squeezing maximum enjoyment for players out of every element** of the game they're allowed to touch. This often means you're not allowed to touch much, and it does fall down when publishers rely on the same tricks over and over again to keep us playing (take a bow, Ubisoft) – but for good or ill, this was part of the legacy *Half-Life* created. Rather than making a game and hoping for the best Valve exploited as much knowledge (and testing) of its potential audience as it could in order to

make something that everyone would love. While it isn't the greatest measuring stick of them all, a rating of 96 on Metacritic shows that this approach with *Half-Life* did *something* right.

This might seem a bit of a love-in – and it is – but it is fair to say that, even back in the hazy past of the late-Nineties, very few of us were that smitten with *Half-Life*'s latter parts. Travelling to the strange alien world of Xen, you were met with a delightfully weird environment – not to mention a terribly poor way to end the game. When one of the main enemies you battle looks like a giant, walking scrotum and the final boss is a gigantic, floating baby whose head peels open, you know something's gone a little bit off-piste.

But even in that respect, *Half-Life* blazed a trail for the others to follow. It showed other developers – through its mistakes – that playing with the core formula of the game so late on in the day was not the right way to do things. It showed that picking your tone, setting your tone and *sticking with* your tone was of supreme importance. And it showed that under no circumstances should first-person platforming make up the majority of the end levels of an otherwise peerless game.

Even Valve itself learned from those mistakes, shying away from taking players anywhere near Xen – or any alien worlds – in *Half-Life*'s spin-offs and follow-ups. This need to be focused, learned by losing direction somewhat in the latter part of the original game, led to one of the best games of all time: *Half-Life 2*, as well as other epic story-led shooters like *Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare* and *Bioshock*. Best of all, none of them featured barely-planned sojourns to alien dimensions.



» [PC] While you might think it's liberating to be outside, this bugger of an attack chopper has other ideas.

> "We should continue aiming high, push boundaries, rethink established wisdom and think outside the box"
> Dario Casali

But even with its various faults, even with its manifest issues ("If you look closely at the software and the content, you will notice that *Half-Life* was actually kind of a mess in some places, but it was only a mess where it didn't matter to players at all," Randy tells us), there's no way *Half-Life* can be held up as anything other than a true bona fide classic. "I'm still very proud of the work we did and am happy that its legacy lives on," Dario tells us. "It reminds me that we should continue aiming high, push boundaries, rethink established wisdom and think outside the box. The cultural impact of *Half-Life* has had just heightens those sentiments."

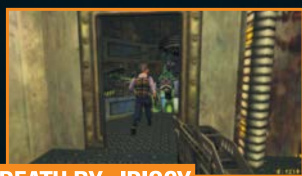
**So we approach the future in an uncertain way, wondering if we'll ever see a game that raises the bar so high again.** Even *Half-Life*'s own sequel, while superb, wasn't as revolutionary as the original – where can we look to for the next big shift in gaming? We don't know. Maybe it will come from a studio of developers, fresh out of working for another, big-name company and with more ideas than it knows what to do with. Maybe it will be an indie, beavering away in his or her bedroom with no idea what they're doing could change everything. Maybe it will never happen.

"I always have fond memories both of playing the games and the time I spent developing some of the games in the franchise," Randy muses. "The setting and situation is so perfect for a first-person action game; there's already too many younger gamers who have no idea what *Half-Life* even is and I'm afraid we're going to need some new content that is badass by tomorrow's standards to get newer gamers into the universe so they can love it as much as we do."

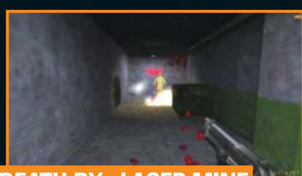
Whatever the case, one truth is absolute as the scientific principles surrounding it: *Half-Life* changed gaming forever, and that fact should never be overlooked or in any way besmirched. Long live the One Free Man. ✱

## A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE DEATHS

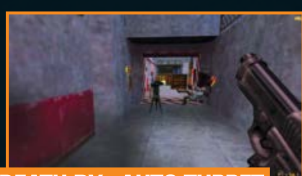
**It turns out that the Black Mesa facility failed its health and safety test…**



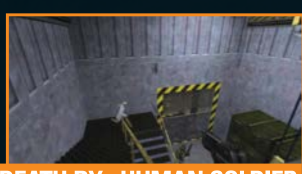
**DEATH BY… IDIOCY**



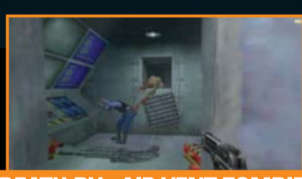
**DEATH BY… LASER MINE**



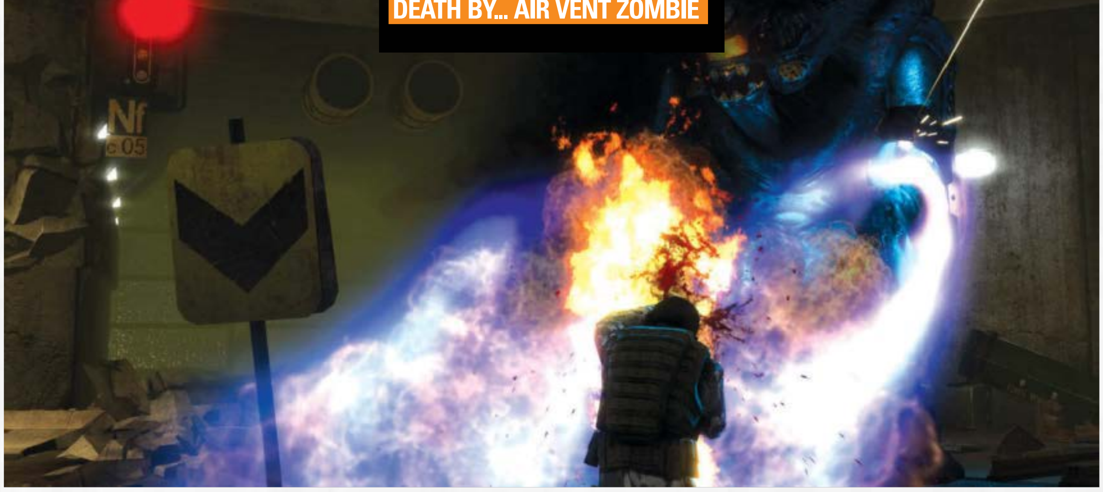
**DEATH BY… AUTO TURRET**



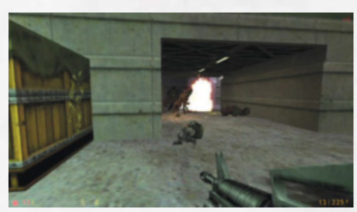
**DEATH BY… HUMAN SOLDIER**



**DEATH BY… AIR VENT ZOMBIE**



» [PC] It was a long time coming (then went back into development), but *Black Mesa* was an incredible, modern reworking of the original *Half-Life*.



» [PC] Poor Gordon is caught between the invading aliens and the team sent in to cover everything up.

# Minority Report

CLASSIC GAMES YOU'VE NEVER PLAYED

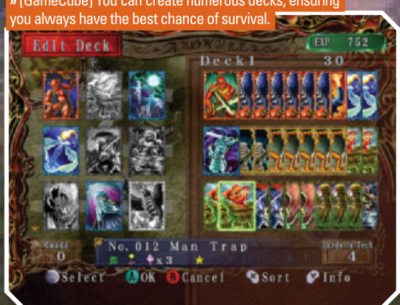


## GAMECUBE

**Nintendo's GameCube always stood out as a bit of an offbeat machine, and not just because it was purple and had a little carry handle. Nick Thorpe looks back at some of the games that built that reputation…**




» [GameCube] You can create numerous decks, ensuring you always have the best chance of survival.







# LOST KINGDOMS

■ DEVELOPER: FROM SOFTWARE ■ YEAR: 2002

■ Nowadays From Software is a respected developer due to the success of *Dark Souls* and *Bloodborne*, but back in 2002 it was a relatively obscure developer in the West. It's not surprising then to learn that *Lost Kingdoms* (or *Rune*, in Japan) didn't have much of a fanfare when it was released back in 2002 – especially as it was wrongly marketed as a RPG.

At its core *Lost Kingdoms* is a card battling game, but it's vastly different to the likes of *Magic: The Gathering*, fully taking advantage of the digital medium it's been created for. Taking on the role of Princess Katia, you must find your father who is investigating a mysterious black fog that has started rolling across the countryside. It's a pretty forgettable story, and one that's over quickly – it's possible to restore peace to the land in under six hours.

What it lacks in length it makes up for in fun, and there's plenty to keep you occupied. This is mainly due to the intuitive and flexible card system that Katia uses. The four face buttons of the GameCube's controller each represent one of the cards in Katia's deck. Stab a face button and the card activates, to be replaced by a new one when its power is fully exhausted. The cards themselves come in a variety of powers that all do different things, there's also a basic elemental system to take into effect too, further adding to *Lost Kingdoms*' strategy.

Summoned cards allow Katia to bring forth powerful creatures, independent cards turn into monsters that will work autonomously, while weapon cards grant Katia various deadly attacks. The weapon and summon cards also grant a risk and reward factor as they typically spring from Katia herself, meaning she has to get close to foes in order to successfully connect with them. Some cards also take longer to activate, so timing is essential to avoid being hit.

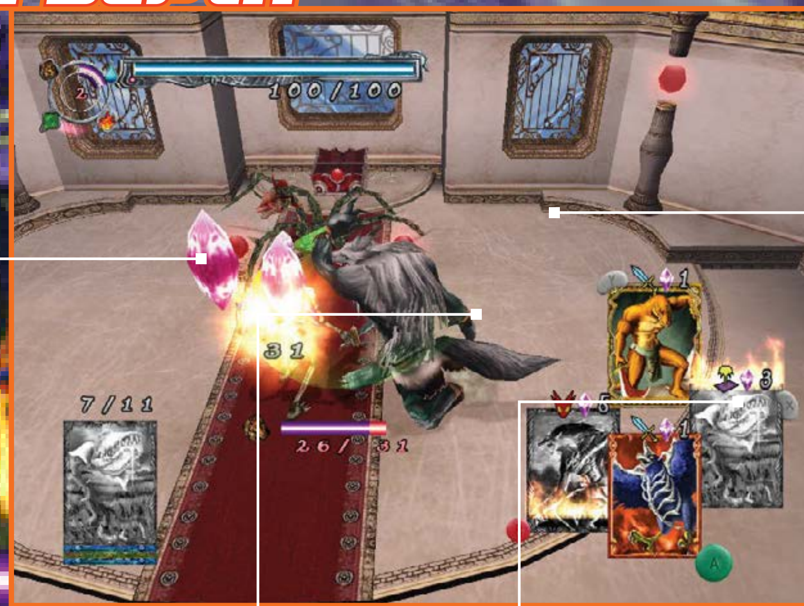


» [GameCube] Gems are fuel for your cards. You can use them when they are greyed out, but it depletes the energy bar.



» [GameCube] There are many red fairies to discover on your travels. You can trade them in for powerful cards.

## IN DEPTH



### GEM FIGHTER
■ Striking monsters will release these pink gems. If you grab them, you'll replenish the energy that is expended when using cards – so make sure you do that.

### CLOSE UP
■ It looks like Katia has vanished, but she's just hidden by the beast she's summoned. Close range fighting is surprisingly common, given that Katia herself can't fight.

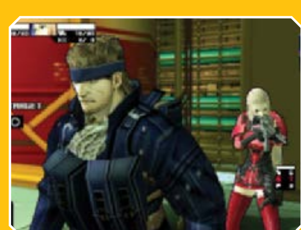
### BURNING WISH
■ Once a card is active, the copy of it on your HUD will start burning. Once the card has burnt to the bottom its effect ends, it is discarded and can't be used further.

### ALL TERRAIN
■ Unlike most card-based games, it's important to pay attention to your surroundings – Katia can easily be trapped with nowhere to run in *Lost Kingdoms*' real-time battles.

The stages themselves are quite small and can usually be completed in around 30 minutes. Puzzles occasionally crop up, but are extremely simple, often requiring you to do little more than activate switches. Fairies also appear on the stages, granting bonuses should you catch them. Annoyingly, some fairies will also trigger random encounters. Said skirmishes are particularly galling as Katia can only hold a maximum of 30 cards in her deck leaving her unable to complete the stage when they eventually run out.

The real-time action works exceptionally well thanks to beautifully balanced cards and some solid level design. The first couple of stages can be tough, particularly if you forget to upgrade your cards and tune your deck, but the battling soon becomes second nature. As with many From Software titles, it takes a well-known concept but adds its own unique spin on it, which immediately helps it stand apart from its peers. In a way we're almost glad that so few people appear to have experienced From Software's quirky little game, as it should make its discovery by you all the more sweeter. Just don't go in expecting an epic RPG – you'll only end up disappointed.

## IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



### METAL GEAR ACID 2
PSP

■ Solid Snake's second card-based outing ironed out a lot of the flaws of the original *Acid*, while retaining the grid-based battlefield that allows for strategic movement and attacks. Unfortunately, most players were still holding out for a full *Metal Gear* action game on PSP and passed over this little gem.



### PHANTASY STAR ONLINE EPISODE III: CARD REVOLUTION
GAMECUBE

■ When people asked for a sequel to *PSO*, this wasn't the game most had in mind – but it's a fun battler all the same. In fact, the game could have featured in this Minority Report if it weren't for the popular series it's attached to...




### SNK VS CAPCOM: CARD FIGHTERS' CLASH
NEO-GEO POCKET COLOR

■ Straight-up card battling it may be, but it's amongst the best straight-up card battlers on any format thanks to its well-designed mechanics. It's long, too – trying to collect all the characters from the rival arcade manufacturers is a task that can keep you going past the 100-hour mark.

# Minority Report

## CHIBI-ROBO!

■ DEVELOPER: SKIP LTD ■ YEAR: 2005

■ Poor old *Chibi-Robo!* arrived late in life for the GameCube, and was overlooked as a result. This is sad, because all Chibi-Robo wants to do is make his owners happy – that's actually the goal of the game. The Sanderson family has bought our chrome-plated friend as a gift for their daughter Jenny, and he's committed to improving their lives by picking up rubbish, cleaning stains, solving their problems and generally being a good buddy.

What this entails in gameplay terms is a 3D platform adventure, with the diminutive Chibi-Robo having to navigate his way around a family home that presents him with significant obstacles – at just ten centimetres in height, our protagonist finds it tough to get off the ground. He later starts to encounter some real threats too, as the hostile Spydorz begin to attack. Everything Chibi-Robo does costs energy, so you'll have to halt your desire to do good deeds every so often in order to find a socket and recharge.

Despite the initially happy vibe and Fifties aesthetic, the game gets pretty dark in tone – without giving away too much of the plot, it's safe to say that Chibi-Robo really has his work cut out for him to keep the Sandersons happy. It never gets entirely serious, but there are some sad moments for a game with such a cute main character.

Due to its late release and low sales, Chibi-Robo is definitely one of the more expensive GameCube games out there, with PAL copies generally selling for £50 or more. Still, as C*hibi-Robo: Zip Lash!* has just been released for 3DS, there's never been a better time to try out the original.



» [GameCube] While he's performing his clean-up duties, Chibi-Robo likes to use himself as a mobile trash can. What a nice chap he is.

» [GameCube] Armed with his trusty toothbrush, Chibi-Robo can clean up stains with no problems.

» [GameCube] Getting around means climbing cables, books and other household objects.

## MORE GAMES TO PLAY



### » ODAMA

■ DEVELOPER: VIVARIUM
■ YEAR: 2006

■ Have you ever wanted to play pinball in feudal Japan? If so, Yoot Saito's curious mix of strategy and arcade gameplay is for you. Your goal is to wipe out enemy soldiers and fortifications with the titular Odama, a gigantic ball, while directing your own with the included microphone. The control system proves a little bit fiddly in practice, but if you're after a unique experience there's literally nothing else like *Odama*.



### » TUBE SLIDER

■ DEVELOPER: ND CUBE
■ YEAR: 2003

■ This tunnel-based futuristic racer is at times a very attractive game, thanks to its unusual course design and smooth frame-rate. However, it suffers from being a little bit basic (there's no weaponry, just two different turbo systems) and the difficulty is wildly uneven – you'll sail through the first cup and hit a brick wall with the second. Still, it's a nice option after you've exhausted the likes of *F-Zero GX* and *XGRA*.



### » DREAM MIX TV WORLD FIGHTERS

■ DEVELOPER: BITSTEP
■ YEAR: 2003

■ Who would win in a fight between Bomberman, Optimus Prime and Solid Snake? That's the question this Japan-only party fighter attempts to answer, as the worlds of Hudson Soft, Konami and Takara collide. The obvious comparison is *Smash Bros.*, and while it isn't as polished as Nintendo's game, it's a lot of fun regardless – and the knockout system will appeal to fighting game purists.



### » DOSHIN THE GIANT

■ DEVELOPER: PARAM
■ YEAR: 2002

■ Who doesn't want to be a giant happy yellow dude? Doshin is just that, and he's out to grow as big as possible. How does he do that? Easy – by helping out the tribes he meets, absorbing the love they feel for him. Alternatively, he could turn vengeful as Jashin, the hate giant – a fire-spreading nasty who feeds off of the islanders' ill will. It's certainly a fitting Nintendo take on the god simulator.

# BEACH SPIKERS

■ DEVELOPER: SEGA AM2 ■ YEAR: 2002

■ While many of you will immediately associate beach volleyball games with lady-ogling (thanks, *Dead Or Alive*), this exclusive arcade conversion is actually far more notable for its excellent mechanics than its scantily-clad cast of characters. Much like Sega's more popular *Virtua Tennis* series, *Beach Spikers* manages to strike an impressive balance between accessibility and depth with a simple two-button control scheme that offers a wide variety of shot types. The dynamic camera is confusing at first but quickly proves to be the game's greatest asset, as each angle is perfect for its situation – a court overview allows players to receive passes easily, while the behind-the-attacker view for spikes allows the defending player to accurately line up a potential block.

As well as the standard arcade tournament mode, there's a World Tour mode which allows you to train an AI partner from scratch, and while she's pretty frustrating in the early stages it definitely adds to the game. Beyond that, there are a few mini-games plus unlockable courts and costumes (including ones themed around past Sega heroes, like *Space Channel 5*'s Ulala), but it won't last single players long. However, if you've got multiplayer partners available it's one of the hidden gems of the GameCube library.




» [GameCube] The camera swings in close behind your players when you're lining up powerful shots.



» [GameCube] Between excellent time of day effects and awesome sand, Beach Spikers is a graphically stunning game.

**"Beach Spikers manages to strike an impressive balance between accessibility and depth with a simple two-button control scheme"**

## RETRO STINKER

### »DRAGON DRIVE: D-MASTERS SHOT

■ DEVELOPER: TREASURE ■ YEAR: 2003

■ Drawing comparisons to *Zone Of The Enders* and *Panzer Dragoon*, this game is nowhere near as good as either. Treasure even refuses to acknowledge having made it.



## » ZOOCUBE

■ DEVELOPER: PUZZLEKINGS
■ YEAR: 2002

■ What exactly is a *Zoocube*, anyway? As it turns out, it's a special type of puzzle that can restore misshapen animals to their correct forms. New animals fly in from six directions, and it's your job to pair them up. If you're feeling brave, you can try to balance your cube by adding equal numbers of animals to each face for a high score. It's a nice break from the usual block-droppers that we've come to expect.



## » RIBBIT KING

■ DEVELOPER: JAMSWORKS
■ YEAR: 2003

■ The GameCube is quite well-supplied with alternative sports games, and golf with frogs is just about as alternative as it gets. But it's not just the looks that are offbeat, as scoring in *Ribbit King* depends as much on picking up items around the course as sinking the frog into the hole quickly. There's a single-player story mode on offer, but with the right group of friends this is a multiplayer game that will last for years.



## » DARKENED SKYE

■ DEVELOPER: BOSTON ANIMATION
■ YEAR: 2002

■ The action-adventure route isn't one we'd expected from *Darkened Skye*, largely because it's a tie-in to Skittles – you know, the fruity sweets. The game's producer Elizabeth Braswell initially rejected it, but eventually decided that she could make a tie-in without making it explicit and ended up taking the humorous route. It's not a top-rate game, but it's definitely not bad for a game in which you cast magic with Skittles.



## » GIFTPIA

■ DEVELOPER: SKIP LTD
■ YEAR: 2003

■ Deemed too strange for a Western release, *Giftpia* is an alternative RPG starring Pockle, who has overslept and missed his coming of age ceremony. Due to the massive expense involved in the ceremony, he has to pay for a second ceremony himself – which means taking on jobs and eventually granting the wishes of Nanashi Island's residents. While this game only came out in Japan, there's a translation guide available online.

# Peripheral Vision







## ESSENTIAL GAME

### Point Blank 2

While holding a gun might automatically put you in mind of military themes, we'd argue that the G-Con 45 game you must own is this collection of shooting mini-games. Despite its family-friendly comedic tone, the game is an extremely diverse test of your shooting skills. Whether you're trying to take out a moving target with a single shot, attempting to destroy a huge target with rapid fire or even playing a gun-assisted game of spot the difference, you'll have a whale of a time – and it's even better when played as a party game, thanks to the two-player support.





## G-Con 45 Fact

■ Despite the availability of the upgraded G-Con 2, some PS2 developers indulged in some consumer-friendly behaviour by supporting the original G-Con 45 in their games. Compatible games include *Endgame*, *Time Crisis II* and *Vampire Night*.

# G-Con 45

» **PLATFORM:** PLAYSTATION » **RELEASED:** 1997 » **COST:** £7 (UNBOXED) / £10 (BOXED)

When *Time Crisis* made its way to the PlayStation, Namco decided that a gun was needed to support it – and boldly, it also decided that the existing model introduced by Konami just didn't meet its requirements. The result was the creation of a new peripheral, the G-Con 45 (or GunCon, outside of Europe) which had a few new features over the old standard. For enhanced accuracy, the gun hooked into the composite video signal of the console itself, and two buttons mounted either side of the barrel allowed players to perform secondary actions, such as hiding in *Time Crisis*.

Of course, the G-Con 45 wasn't without its flaws. It wasn't backwards compatible with existing gun games such as *Die Hard Trilogy*, and players who used RF or RGB SCART to hook up their consoles often got home to find that they needed an extra adaptor to use the peripheral at all. However, it received a good amount of support, as the existing Konami standard was dropped and all new guns adopted the Namco technology. For that reason it remains an essential PlayStation peripheral , so long as you have the CRT TV necessary to run it. *

In the chair with...

# MIKE HALLY

**From feeling gravity's pull to destroying the Death Star and storming Area 51, Mike Hally spent over 25 years creating some of Atari's finest arcade games. Paul Drury feels the force**

When it comes to creating arcade games, Mike Hally has a back catalogue second to none. Beginning in Atari's pinball division, he worked on some fine tables before moving into videogames at the start of the Eighties. He stayed at the company for over two decades, leading the team that produced the classic *Star Wars* coin-op in 1983, and working on dozens of memorable titles ranging from *Indiana Jones And The Temple of Doom* to *Area 51* and *Gauntlet: Legacy*. As arcades began to fade in the Noughties, he moved into console development and despite retiring in 2003 at the ripe old age of 48, he has since returned to the world of game development to help out on numerous projects, including *Breeders Cup: Tournament Edition*, which won the prestigious AMOA Innovation Award in 2005.




» Mike's joined Atari in 1977 and still treasures his first company badge.

**With all the hype around the new *Star Wars* film, are you getting misty-eyed about your days working on the coin-op game?**
I was always a *Star Wars* fan, even before I had the unique opportunity to work on the licence at Atari and follow it up with *The Empire Strikes Back*. Yes, I get a little nostalgic. I spent so much time up at Lucas ranch, getting toy models, or pictures or pitching our storyboards for the game. They were very protective of the *Star Wars* universe – you couldn't just make stuff up! They would come to Atari too… they were tough on me!

**Did you meet George Lucas?**
When it was all finished, I drove up there in a truck with a sit-down version of *Star Wars* and played it with him [laughs].

**We won't ask who got the better score. How did you come to work for Atari?**
I went to Santa Clara university which was in California, in that Silicon Valley area. I'd heard of Atari but it was only five years old when I graduated as a mechanical engineer. They actually came to my university and so I went to an interview on campus and I was like, 'Are you kidding me? I can work in pinball? This is the company for me!'

**Did your parents approve?**
They didn't really know what Atari was but they could see I was so enthused. I think they were just glad I'd got a job right out of college!

**Pinball was a new venture for Atari. Did you feel like David taking on the Goliaths in Chicago like Bally and Gottlieb?**
Yeah, a little, but we were taking a different approach. We were basing our tables on electronics. Back in Chicago, they were old school. They did it all with metal! We went to a wide-body playfield and started doing innovative things that they hadn't thought of yet.

**One of the innovative things you did was make the mammoth table *Hercules*.**
[Mike laughs] I worked on the components for




» [Arcade] Mike's probably best known for leading the team behind the classic *Star Wars* coin-op.

that table and I remember being told I had to design a plunger that kids could use but instead of it firing a little steel ball, it had to fire a cue ball from a pool table. Holy crap! I was blown away with how big everything had to be. It was just nuts.

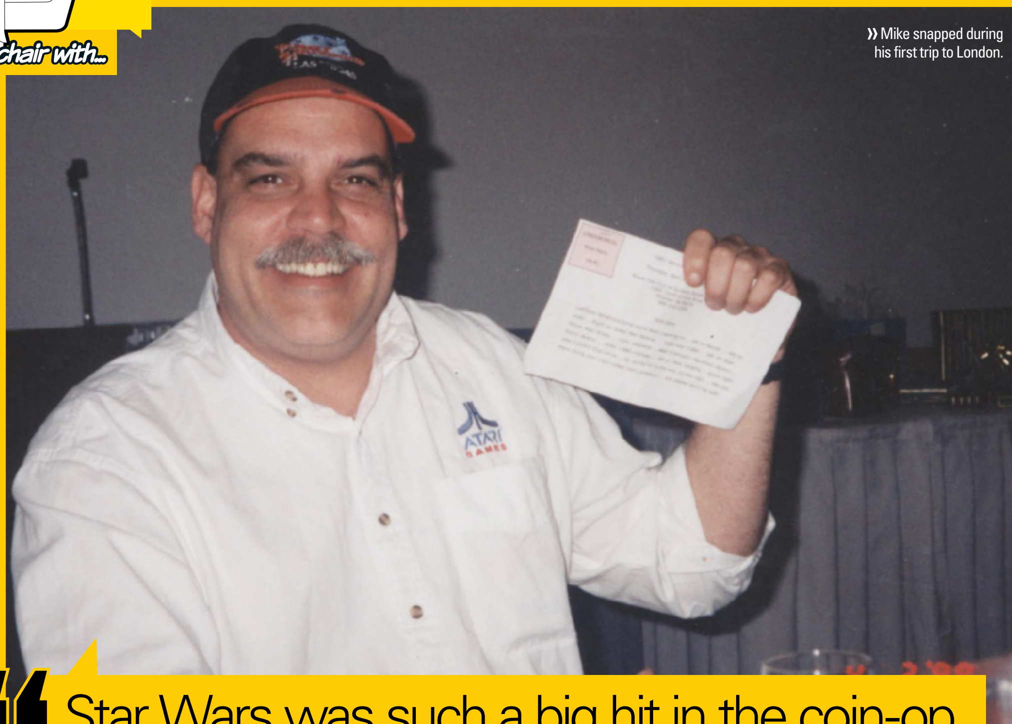
**When Atari shut down its pinball division at the end of 1979, you were moved into coin-op videogames. Was it a very different place?**
No, it was still full of young, energetic, crazy people and that same fun atmosphere. My first project actually started out as a game which was partially pinball, partially a videogame, called *Penetration*.

**Catchy title. Did that become *Akka Arrh*?**
Yeah, combining elements of both didn't pan out but we kept the team together and turned it into a videogame. You started looking at the big picture, with all these aliens going through geometric shapes, and you trying to kill them there but those that got through, you had to tap a button and you'd zoom in. You'd be zooming in and out and trying to balance how long to stay in each phase so the aliens wouldn't be kicking your ass! I didn't think it was too complicated but when you look back, the games that did really well were just so simple. We were constantly trying to do new things and push the envelope. Maybe we did too much for the players. We sent prototypes out but it never caught on.

**Your next project, *Gravitar*, also tried to bring in some new ideas.**
Everybody loved *Asteroids*, but I wanted [the game] to let me travel! I wanted to go from planet to



> "Atari was full of young, energetic, crazy people. It was a perfect thing. I'd still be there today if it was still running!"
>
> Mike Hally



» Mike snapped during his first trip to London.

> "Star Wars was such a big hit in the coin-op business I was like, 'Hey, let's do Firefox, let's do Empire Strikes Back, let's do Indiana Jones. This is great!'" Mike Hally

planet, not just spinning around shooting rocks. With *Gravitar*, if you're not a very good player, you just go to the easiest planet and learn how to play the game and if you're more advanced, you can zip through the universe and boom, you're in the next universe. I thought that was good design and carried that through all my projects. But the gravity killed it, I think. Hardcore gamers loved it but I missed the general audience again.

**Your next game certainly didn't miss the mass market. How did you get to lead *Star Wars*?**
I'm not sure who at Atari first decided to go after the *Star Wars* licence, but once it did, they came to me and asked if I could design a game based on the first movie. I said, 'Absolutely!'

**How did you go about designing the game? Were there arguments about which scenes from the film would work best?**
No, it was really easy! I was the project leader and designer and had the script and I'd obviously seen the movie so of course it was going to have Luke Skywalker fighting TIE Fighters. You were obviously going to encounter Darth Vader and the Death Star has to be involved. I mean, the trench sequence has to be there! I had to look at what we could do with the technology, too. We could do these simple towers, so we expanded that. Towers and turrets do appear loosely in the film before you dipped into the Death Star trench.

**Your next few games were also based on films at a time when film licences weren't yet commonplace.**
*Star Wars* was such a massive hit in the coin-op business I was like, 'Hey, let's do *Firefox*, let's do *Empire Strikes Back*, let's do *Indiana Jones*. This is great – I don't have to think this stuff up, I can just take the best parts [of a movie] and transition it into a videogame!'

***Firefox* used the then pioneering LaserDisc technology. Did you sense the possibilities or foresee the problems?**
I was blown away by *Dragon's Lair*. With *Star Wars*, you had to fight for memory then all of a sudden it was like, hey, put it on a disc, we got a crap load of storage. I kept the same team together from *Star Wars* and said, let's do another one, let's make some more money [laughs].

**How did you go about getting the film footage?**
I went to the studios in LA and made a connection. I remember meeting this old lady in a trailer and spent the whole afternoon looking through the footage and outtakes shot for the movie. I had all these sky and land sequences and I thought, okay, that's my background. Then I gave them 20 grand and said let me borrow the model of the *Firefox*. I brought in some tech guys that knew about video and we went up to a studio. We had to create multiple tracks, because we had multiple jump points… every time you shot at a plane, it either blew up or you missed and it didn't! I had a whole bunch of one inch tape machines running and I'd interleave [the tracks]. It was way complicated and way more than anyone else had done with LaserDisc.



**At what point did you realise this cutting-edge technology was flawed?**
I knew it was a disaster when I had ten

## YOU ASK THE QUESTIONS

### Mike provides the wisdom that you so desperately seek

**MAYHEM: Could you crib any technical information from other LaserDisc games before you began work on *Firefox*?**

No! I had no idea what I was doing. I didn't even understand how a LaserDisc was pressed and how the laser would read it. I started with no real knowledge. I surrounded myself with my *Star Wars* team and added some video people… I didn't know what I was doing at first but I did know exactly what I wanted the game to be like.

**ERIC: Were you happy with how *APB* turned out?**

We threw everything but the kitchen sink in there. I love the boss sequences, where you run down criminals and put them back in jail, I love the cop quota and you're driving, so you need to watch the gas and then there's the timer… there's a lot going on! The playfields were pretty big and there are so many secret areas. I think people kind of got lost. Maybe we could have made it more linear and not so open. People like repetition!

**THE_HAWK: What was your happiest period working in the games industry?**

Processors and memory were the two things that really restricted us, so once we got to the point when you weren't constantly fighting with your game design and how you could make it work with the limited memory and processor speed, that's when it became really fun!

**MAYHEM: Have you ever played *Thrust*, given it's based on *Gravitar*?**

What's the name of the game? *Thrust*? No, never heard of that! I wasn't really aware of what was going on in the home [market]. I was just a kid and was really wrapped up in coin-op. I didn't get involved until the early-Nineties when I became the design manager and then I set up a huge library of consumer games. I had every machine so if anyone had an idea for a coin-op game, I'd play everything related on the consumer side.





thousand broken machines piled up in the warehouse! We went with Philips' spec and during development we didn't have that many issues, but when it went into production, it was fatal. Man, it cost us so much.

**You returned to the *Star Wars* universe in 1985 with *The Empire Strikes Back*. Were there elements that you wanted to include that you hadn't managed to first time?**
I knew exactly what I wanted to do and exactly how to do it, like I was going to use a piggyback board to give us more memory so we could do the walker sequence. But there was one fatal flaw in my thinking. The company said it was going to be kit for *Star Wars*. I thought, well, that's good, there's a crap load of *Star Wars* machines out there. Unfortunately, no-one wanted to change their machine into an Empire!

**It sounds like you were almost victims of your own success.**
Yeah. I was like, why don't we make a couple of thousand *Empire* uprights? Marketing didn't think smart. They thought everyone was going to want to update their *Star Wars* but nope! People wanted *Empire* but didn't want to get rid of their *Star Wars*.

**You had more success with *Indiana Jones And The Temple of Doom*, released the same year. Was this another film you could see translating well into game form?**
I knew the mine cart with the whipping of the thuggies on the side was going to work. I had the script and I knew which scenes were going to work and I think that one turned out pretty well. You really felt like you were Indiana Jones.

**The first half of Eighties was something of a golden age for the Atari coin-op. What do you think was the secret of such a creative and successful company?**
We had some really talented guys. The hardware people and programmers were really good. We were all about the same age – Rich Adam, Ed Rotberg, Ed Logg, me. We all got on really well and we all stayed there throughout that time, from the late-Seventies to the late-Eighties. We got used to working with each other but there was also severe competition. I want to get my game out before yours and make it better than yours! The dynamics were really fun.

**What were your feelings towards the Atari VCS coders? Didn't you have T-shirts made that said 'Coin-op: The Real Atari'?**
Yes we had those T-shirts! Maybe we felt like the bastard child. We were the smallest division but we thought our games were the best.

## SELECTED TIMELINE

**PINBALL**
- **Middle Earth** 1978
- **Superman** 1979
- **Hercules** 1979

**GAMES**
- **Gravitar** [Arcade] 1982
- **Star Wars** [Arcade] 1983
- **Firefox** [Arcade] 1983
- **The Empire Strikes Back** [Arcade] 1985
- **Road Runner** [Arcade] 1985
- **Indiana Jones And The Temple of Doom** [Arcade] 1985
- **APB** [Arcade] 1987
- **Blasteroids** [Arcade] 1987
- **STUN Runner** [Arcade] 1989
- **Skull And Crossbones** [Arcade] 1989
- **Marble Man** [Arcade] Unreleased
- **Relief Pitcher** [Arcade] 1992
- **Metal Maniax** [Arcade] Unreleased
- **Area 51** [Arcade] 1995
- **Freeze** [Arcade] Unreleased
- **Gauntlet Legends** [Arcade] 1998
- **Gauntlet Dark Legacy** [Arcade] 1999



» [Arcade] *S.T.U.N. Runner* was inspired by Mike's frustration at his commute to work. Thank you, Californian traffic.

**You collaborated on *APB* (1987) with Dave Theurer, the man responsible for such revered hits as *Missile Command* and *Tempest*. What was he like to work with?**
I was a huge fan of his games. Dave wrote these incredible tools, he was a genius at that, but they were struggling with game design on *APB*. I got brought in and turned my whole life around to work on it. Dave liked to come in at 4pm and work till the sun came up. So I did too. The artist went home at 5pm and we'd be there all night. I loved working with Dave and it was a fun game but I had a tendency to think, 'This will be cool,' and throw it into the game. Maybe there was just too much going on.



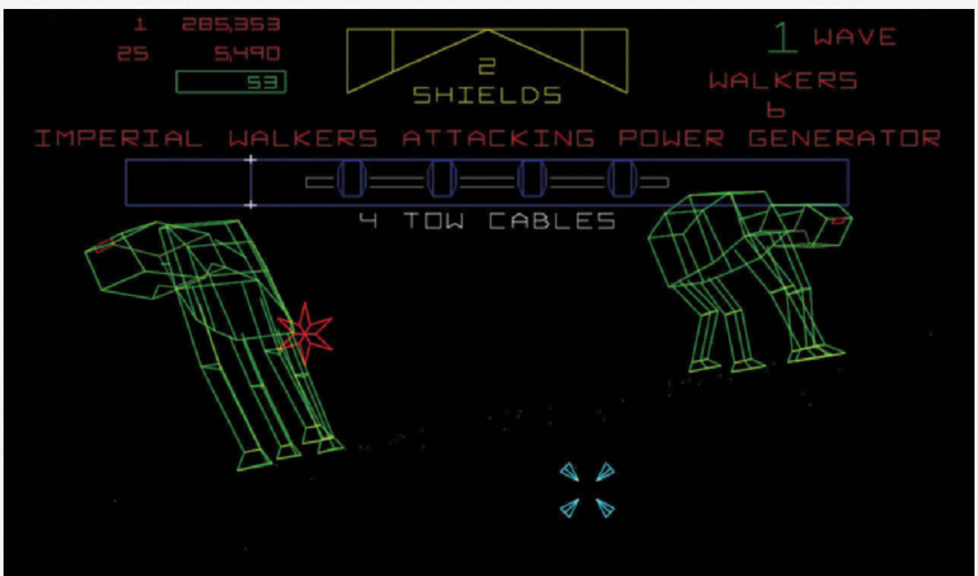
» [Arcade] Mike collaborated with Dave '*Missile Command*' Theurer on *APB*.

**Do you think it was too complicated for players?**
Oh, you could run out of time, you could screw up your quota, you could run out of gas... but then I was assuming people were getting good at playing these games! We started them off with *Pong* and kept adding more each time. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't.

**The same year you worked on *Blasteroids*, which was yet another game that introduced lots of innovative features.**
The idea was *Asteroids*, done on raster, combined with *Transformers*, because they were big at the time. Then we added power-ups and you could slam into your buddy's ship and it would become a new ship. That was so cool! We were always trying to do something new. That was important to all of us.

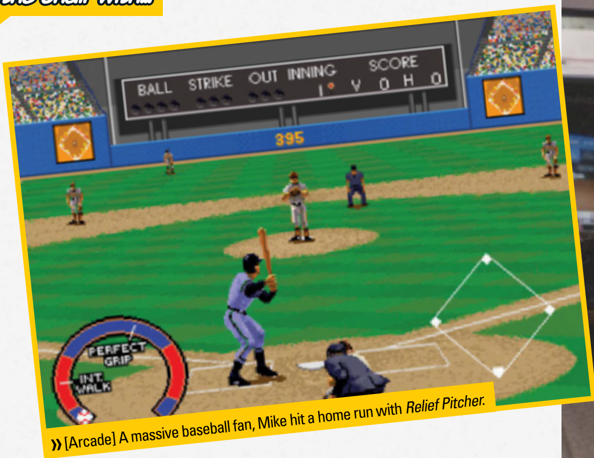
**You collaborated with Ed Rotberg on that project and also worked on *S.T.U.N. Runner*, released in 1989.**
That was my idea! I was so frustrated with the commute to work and the traffic. If you don't have room for more lanes, then give me a tube so I can whip around and overtake people on the side! I thought, 'We could turn this into a game... I've never done a driving game so let's do it.'

**Did you have much to do with that gigantic hulking *S.T.U.N. Runner* cabinet that you could sit on?**
Oh yeah, I was the mechanical engineer, I worked on the controller, how it would feel to steer. We had excellent cabinet guys and I told them with this game, you gotta sit down!

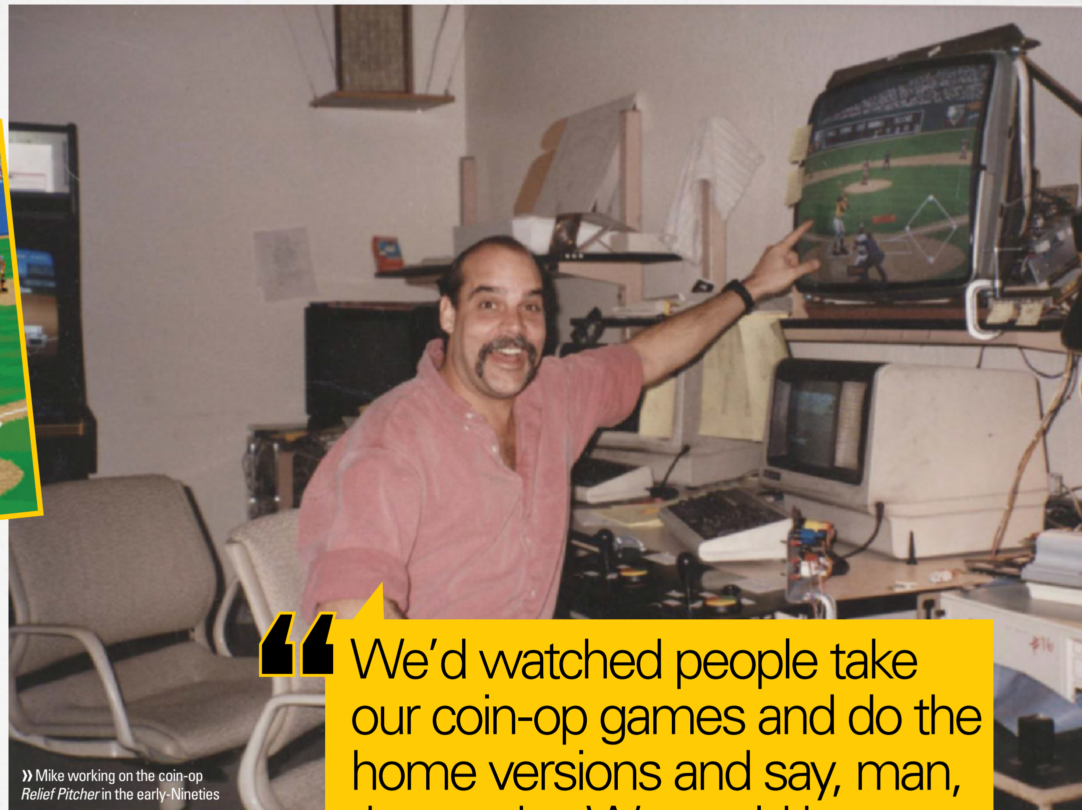



» [Arcade] Mike returned to the *Star Wars* universe with *The Empire Strikes Back* in 1985.

In the chair with…



» [Arcade] A massive baseball fan, Mike hit a home run with *Relief Pitcher.*


» Mike working on the coin-op *Relief Pitcher* in the early-Nineties

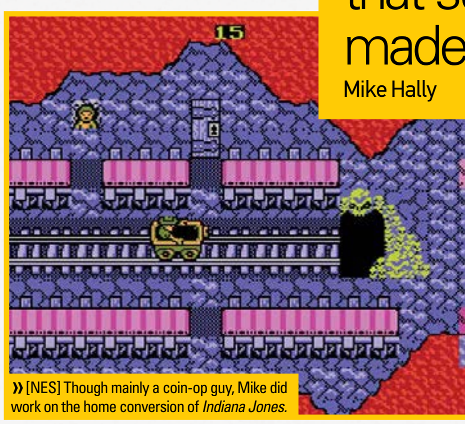
**Your last game of the Eighties was *Skull And Crossbones,* a swashbuckling adventure set on the high seas.**
Hey, I like pirates! That was a Bob Flanagan game. He had this idea of a fighting pirate game and I said I'd do the design, plan all the layouts, place all the booty. It isn't well known and didn't make a ton of money but it was a really fun game to do. We also did the home version of it along with *Indiana Jones* and that was the first time a coin-op team did the consumer port.

**Wasn't it frustrating trying to cram your own arcade title into inferior hardware?**
I love the challenge! And it was really rewarding after we'd done the coin-op game. We'd watched people take our products and do the home versions and say, man, that sucks. We could have made it so much better!

**Did you ever consider jumping across to develop for consoles full-time?**
Follow my career and I do eventually! But no, I wanted to stay in coin-op forever.

**The start of the Nineties seems a difficult time for Atari. Quite a few of your games never got released, like *Marble Man*…**
I've no idea why that never got released. *Marble Madness* was an extremely good game but it only had four playfields so you could get through it pretty quickly. I added power ups, I made the marble a character and Bob [Flanagan] and I built in about 40 playfields. You ended the game by racing up a mountain side to be king of the hill. It was completely done and worked great but marketing couldn't decide whether it should be a trackball game or joystick. So we did both but through their stupidity, they never released it.

> "We'd watched people take our coin-op games and do the home versions and say, man, that sucks. We could have made it so much better!"
> Mike Hally


» [NES] Though mainly a coin-op guy, Mike did work on the home conversion of *Indiana Jones.*


» [Arcade] *Skull And Crossbones* a booty-full game. Geddit?

**Were there any others games that didn't make it?**
By the time we got to the early-Nineties, Atari was pretty lost. *Relief Pitcher* was the only game we released for the whole of 1992. We were struggling. By late 1993, I got started on *Metal Maniax* which was another huge undertaking. I love the *Demolition Derby* games from the consumer side. I thought, yeah, we can have an arena and take lots of crappy cars that can slam into people really fast, bits flying off. I think I blew $5 million of the company's money on that game and we made about ten units. If it wasn't for the poor frame-rate, that game would have kicked ass!

**Didn't *Metal Maniax* have a completely different title originally?**
Yeah, *Carmageddon*! For the prototype, we printed that title on a metal plate and shot bullets through it and had blood dripping from it…

**You should have sued SCi when they used that name! Didn't you also produce a 'match 3' puzzle game called *Freeze* which never released? That was an idea with legs…**
Atari really screwed me over. It told me it was for the Japanese market so I did all the translation and then it said it didn't test well. I'm telling you, it was a really fun game. People are still trying to buy the boards off me today!

**Things get better for you and Atari in 1995 when you produce *Area 51*.**
Now you're talking! It was already being developed by an outside group, [including] Robert Weatherby, who used to work at Atari. They were using a Jaguar chip set and they couldn't quite get the programming right. I was told by a Warner Brothers VP to work on it and said fine. It wasn't even full-screen at that point but we found a way to do it. *Area 51* was an incredible, super great idea of Robert's. Second best game I've ever worked on and it made a huge amount of money. It was put on every platform going.

**We understand there are lots of secret rooms in the game, including one that lets you shoot the development team. Can we take a pot shot at you, Mike?**
[laughs] Yes you can shoot me. I did all the secret rooms. My favourite is the bathroom. There are aliens at the urinal and you shoot them and the one stall door opens and there's an alien sat on the toilet taking a dump. And in the last building you go in, you can

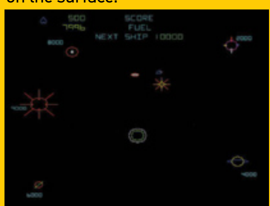


# FIVE TO PLAY

The most important games of Mike Hally's impressive career

## GRAVITAR 1982

■ Mike's first published videogame might have been a little bit on the tough side for the arcade crowd of the time, but it's an absolute joy to revisit. *Gravitar* requires real dexterity as you try to blast enemy turrets and destroy planets whilst hastily picking up fuel cells on the surface.





## STAR WARS 1983

■ No surprise that this is Mike's personal favourite of his own games. Remember sitting in a cockpit cabinet? Remember hearing Obi Wan telling you to use the force? Remember that feeling when you destroyed your first Death Star? Of course you do because this is a coin-op classic.

## BLASTEROIDS 1987

■ Everyone loves *Asteroids* so this sequel of sorts kept what was great about the original and added in power-ups, multiple routes, boss battles and ship switching on the fly. Particularly brilliant in co-op mode and on a dedicated cab with a spinner controller if you can find one.





## AREA 51 1995

■ Lightgun games remain a favoured genre for coin-op cabinets as the satisfaction of holding a chunky plastic pistol in your hand and blasting aliens works so much better in the arcade than at home. *Area 51* is big, dumb fun with a surprising amount of secrets to discover.

## GAUNTLET LEGENDS 1998

■ Revisiting a much-loved title like *Gauntlet* can be a tricky business but this effort managed to capture that co-operative spirit and sense of taking on the hordes together exceptionally well, whilst adding in RPG elements and vast worlds to explore.



see my name on one of the office doors. We liked sneaking our names into games, like in *Star Wars*, right before the Death Star explodes, 'May the Force Be With You' turns into all of our names.

**Did you feel it was important for the team working on a game to have their efforts acknowledged by name and get that recognition?**
I think so. I never really thought about it. When you had a successful game that made a lot of money, they treated you well. That's one of the reasons why I stayed there so long. And I loved the people I worked with and where I was living. It was a perfect thing. I'd still be there today if it was still running!

**Though the arcades were starting to wane at the end of the Nineties, you did work on one more hugely successful game. Who first decided it was time to revisit *Gauntlet* with *Gauntlet Legends*?**
We hadn't done a four-player game at Atari for a long time and now we had Midway's new hardware, we said, 'Wouldn't it be cool to make Gauntlet a 3D game?' That was another long development. Tons of animation and tons of playfields and a lot of gameplay. Oh my lord, that took frigging forever but didn't it turn out great! We were getting thousand dollar earnings in a week from [single machines]. The industry was freaked out. They couldn't believe how much money it was making.

**You mentioned that you were now using Midway's hardware.**
Yeah, Midway owned us for those last few games. We needed money! Neil Nicastro [chairman of Midway] bought us for $20m or something and in the year between *Gauntlet* and *San Francisco Rush 2049*, we'd paid that back. Coin-op was split into two huge site team – the *Rush* team and *Gauntlet* team.

**And your team produced a sequel to *Gauntlet Legends* the following year.**
We had had such success with *Legends*, we did *Gauntlet Dark Legacy* but it was a similar thing like



» [Arcade] *Area 51* was a huge hit for Atari but then who doesn't like shooting aliens in toilets?

with *The Empire Strikes Back*. It could be a kit but no-one wanted to upgrade their *Legends*! They didn't make many [dedicated] machines… Our team also did the PS2 version of *Dark Legacy* and there was a lot of content in it, so that's what we ran with for *Gladiator: The Crimson Reign*.

**Yes, the new Millennium saw you finally leave the coin-op industry and move into developing games for home consoles. Did you feel it was the right time to move on?**
It wasn't time for me to leave but I knew it was time for coin-op to leave. Once Midway bought us and got rid of our manufacturing in California, I knew it was only a matter of time. No-one was really working on coin-op games – everyone was making PS2 games. They wanted to make money!

**You had spent your career working on coin-op games. You must have felt sad to see it go…**
No, I was just glad to still have a job! I'm flexible. I'm a mechanical engineer, I'm a game designer… hardware evolves and changes and I move with it. And I was really excited by the power of PS2 and Xbox. I was like, bring it on, let's do this!



» Mike blasting aliens in *Area 51* at the ACME show in 1996.

***Sadly Gladiator: The Crimson Reign* was never released and then in 2003, you finally decided that it was time leave the company.**
Yeah, I kind of went into retirement, at the tender age of 48! But I've come out of retirement roughly five times to help out friends of mine. I worked on *Breeders Cup* with a bunch of old Atari guys, I developed a shuffle board game called *Puck Off* for Global VR, I did a *Betty Boop* game for Namco. Since 2010, I've hooked up with Robert Weatherby and the *Area 51* guys and I'm also responsible for all software quality assurance for slot machines [produced by] a company in Atlanta. Actually, I'm talking to you from my garage in the middle of fifteen slot machines!

**Do you think you'll ever really retire?**
Probably not! ★

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**Special thanks to Mike for his time and for digging out his old Atari photos and thanks to Martyn for additional help.**


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26
LAP
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TOTAL 01' 49"734
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PIRELLI
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# F355 Challenge

## FOREVER SEEING RED

» RETROREVIVAL

» DREAMCAST » SEGA AM2 » 2000

**It's rare for me to become fonder of an arcade game upon picking up a home conversion, but that's exactly what happened when I snapped up a copy of *F355 Challenge* for the Dreamcast.**

It might seem crazy that anyone would choose a dinky white box and a standard controller over the full steering wheel and elaborate panoramic display of the arcade cabinet, but *F355* never felt quite like an arcade racer. In fact, it was a complete shock to the system – lured in by Yu Suzuki, beautiful visuals and the world's most famous sports cars, I expected a modern day *OutRun* and got a hardcore simulator. After a thoroughly humiliating initial encounter in my local coin-op emporium, I scurried straight back to *Crazy Taxi*.

Fast-forward a little, and the Dreamcast version of the game that had sent me packing was cheap enough to be an impulse purchase. Although the lack of the arcade's background noise meant that I was subjected to the game's dreadful music, I was pleased to find that the incredible graphics had come over flawlessly and the home version even had a good selection of additional tracks. But the biggest thing was that the prospect of actually getting good at *F355 Challenge* wasn't quite so daunting. Simply getting near first place took days of solid play and was incredibly rewarding, as I'm sure it would have been in the arcade. The crucial difference was that I didn't mind losing so much when I wasn't paying £1 per credit to do it… *



>> This month we play through the latest Tomb Raider, get to grips with a brand new Zelda game and find out if the latest Project Zero is as scary as the earlier games



» [Xbox One] Lara can decode murals and other items to improve her language skills.

# Rise Of The Tomb Raider

## ALL YOU NEED IS KILL

### INFORMATION

- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** Xbox One
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** XBOX 360
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £49.99
- » **PUBLISHER:** MICROSOFT
- » **DEVELOPER:** CRYSTAL DYNAMICS
- » **PLAYERS:** 1



Lara Croft's new adventure is an enjoyable action game, but it's not a *Tomb Raider* game. Yes, there is globetrotting, and yes, there are 'tombs', but they take a distinctive back seat so Lara Croft can simply kill as many people as possible. It slavishly follows the template set by *Uncharted*, so much in fact, that it now has no sense of its own identity, which is a shame, as we rather liked the directions the reboot was heading in.

*Rise Of The Tomb Raider*'s story is decent, but it's one you've heard a million times before. Lara is struggling over the death of her father and takes on his quest to find an ancient artifact that grants immortality. A mysterious group called Trinity is also after the object and targets Lara, who then teams up with a group of natives that have helped guard the secret city containing the relic. It once again attempts to humanise Lara, as she questions her motives and comes to terms with the loss of her father, whose reputation was left in tatters, but like *Tomb Raider*, it juxtaposes poorly with what's happening on-screen. You can't sympathise with this supposedly adventurous archaeologist when she has the sort of weapon training expertise that would make a navy seal blush and has a kill count that would shame the likes of Marcus Fenix and Nathan Drake.

Make no mistake *Rise Of The Tomb Raider* is just another run-of-the-mill balls-out shooting game, albeit one that takes place in beautifully constructed environments. As with *Tomb Raider*, Crystal Dynamics has created a genuinely interesting world, which you'll certainly want to explore. In that respect, it does channel the spirit of earlier games. Yes trees, ledges, caves and everything else you can interact with are blatantly signposted, leading you by the hand before you even start to activate Lara's *Batman*-esque survival power, but it's always enjoyable when the action breaks and you can simply search for the many items that the

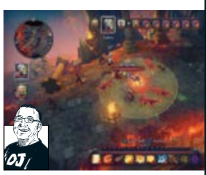
### BRIEF HISTORY

» The original *Tomb Raider* was released in 1996 and created by Core Design. The franchise quickly became associated with the PlayStation early in its life, but soon head to other systems. After the disappointing *Angel Of Darkness*, the franchise was handed over to Crystal Dynamics who rebooted the franchise twice, once with *Tomb Raider: Legend* in 2006, and again with *Tomb Raider* in 2013.

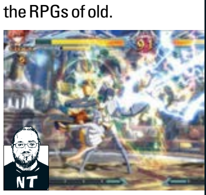


» [Xbox One] Despite being an apparent survivalist it's incredibly hard to shake enemies once they spot you.

### * PICKS OF THE MONTH



**DARRAN**
**Divinity: Original Sin**
It does suffer from clunky control issues on Xbox One, but this is still a wonderful throwback to the RPGs of old.



**NICK**
**BlazBlue: ChronoPhantasma Extend**
I've had a soft spot for this technical fighting series since the original game, and the new edition rocks.


» [Xbox One] The tombs feel throwaway, consisting of a single area with the odd puzzle thrown in.



» [Xbox One] If you enjoy collecting things you'll love *Rise Of The Tomb Raider*, the dynamic world helps too.

**"Crystal Dynamics has created a interesting world, which you'll certainly want to explore"**



## LARA CROFT AND THE QUEST FOR CARDS

***Rise Of The Tomb Raider* features a new card system that forms the backbone of the Expedition mode. As the story mode is completed, credits are awarded that can be used to buy a variety of card parks. While many of the cards are weapons that can be equipped upon starting play, they also feature modifiers and penalties to make expeditions easier or harder and can even contain new missions. As with Ultimate Team you'll have to play a fair few games to earn the decent cards, but a microtransaction option is included. Due to the game not being online yet we've no idea how it will affect scores, but hopefully you won't have to pay through the nose in order to fairly compete.**

» [Xbox One] There's a lot of killing in *Rise Of The Tomb Raider.* Don't worry, Lara is really good at it.

game has hidden away. Replay value is high too as it's highly unlikely that you'll find everything on a first play through, particularly the tombs, which are surprisingly well hidden this time around.

The tombs were a big bone of contention with the last game, as they were a poor substitute for the ones found in earlier adventures, typically being largish rooms with the odd puzzle to solve. While things start off promisingly, with Lara exploring an old ruin in Syria, they continue to be woefully underdeveloped, following the same structure of *Tomb Raider*, which would be fine if the words Tomb and Raider weren't in the game's title. While a few are fairly tricky to solve, they'll rarely keep you stumped for too long and have you wishing for the impressive constructions of earlier games.

While the tombs might disappoint, the crafting has at least been expanded upon and is a lot easier to use this time around. Lara can now collect a large number of objects, from feathers to berries and create all manner of useful items and weapons. The actual crafting is more refined too, allowing you to easily craft new arrows while you're been attacked by enemy soldiers, for example. Another improvement over *Tomb Raider* is the large number of tools Lara has, which open up the game *Metroid*-style as gameplay progresses. There's always a good reason to return to past areas to pick up goodies that were inaccessible earlier in the game and it also highlights how well defined the world Crystal Dynamics has created is.

While the new campaign offers plenty of replay value, the new online mode, Expeditions, is an even greater time-waster. Sadly, it's only playable online, where you compete against your friends to earn the highest possible score. While there are four modes, the most important are Score Attack and Remnant Resistance. Score Attack has you racing through a level as quickly as possible, collecting wisps that will increase your overall multiplier. Remnant Resistance on the other hand is a series of missions that require you to take out specific creatures, hunt down enemies, uncover items and numerous other tasks. It's even possible to create your own adventures, but you'll need cards in order to do so (see box out). In fact the only real downside of these modes is the inclusion of Microtransactions, which will no doubt annoy those who feel they have no place in full-price games.

*Rise Of The Tomb Raider* is a fun adventure, but Crystal Dynamics seems unwilling to push the franchise, dialling back the horror aspects of the original and simply being content to try and keep up with Naughty Dog. It does innovate with its Expeditions mode, however, which is a welcome addition to the series, and while the game does run out of steam in its later stages, descending into endless shoot outs, it does remain enjoyable. Just don't expect it to bring anything new to either the table or the franchise. *

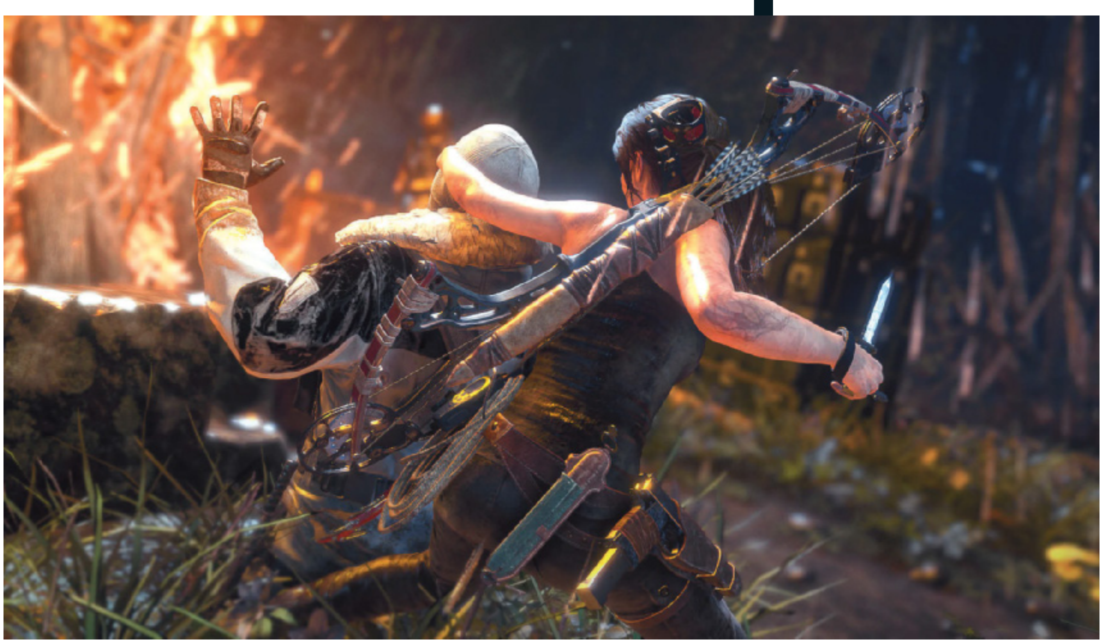
### ✱WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD
**TOMB RAIDER (PC)**



▼ SOMETHING NEW
**UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES (PLAYSTATION 3)**





## In a nutshell

**It may be a shameless *Uncharted* clone that brings little new to the series, but it remains enjoyable, mainly due to the entertaining Expeditions portion of the game.**

7
RetroGamer_Mag scored **7** for
Rise Of The Tomb Raider
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

# RETROROUND-UP

>> Every month we look at all the classics and latest releases that are available to buy or download

## BlazBlue: ChronoPhantasma Extend

» **System:** PS4 (tested), PS3, Vita, Xbox One » **Cost:** £59.99 » **Buy it from:** PS Store, Xbox Live

**The times, they are a changin'. *Street Fighter* and *Guilty Gear* has already ditched sprites and *The King Of Fighters XIV* is moving to 3D as well, so *BlazBlue* is now the biggest name left in 2D fighting.** Luckily, the latest ludicrously-titled entry in the series is a strong flag-bearer for the genre. If you've never played a *BlazBlue* game before, it's most like Arc System Works stablemate *Guilty Gear* – it's a very technical fighting game which emphasises combos and aerial attacks, and features a genuinely diverse cast of characters. Each character's major differentiating factor is their 'Drive' attack, which has unique properties – for example, Ragna uses his to leech health from the enemy, Tager uses his to draw enemies in with magnetism, and Noel's triggers a custom combo sequence. If it all sounds a bit daunting, the game features comprehensive training and tutorial sections, and each character can be played with simplified special moves and other benefits in Stylish mode.

*BlazBlue's* fighting mechanics have always been great, and the major difference between versions is the content heaped on top of those mechanics. In the case of *BlazBlue ChronoPhantasma Extend*, that's 28 characters (including one new and one returning fighter), plus a variety of play modes. As well as the usual arcade mode, there's a story mode which sticks frankly incomprehensible visual novel sections between fights, and if you're in the mood for more ludicrous anime nonsense, the new Remix Heart Gaiden mode adds a story based on a spin-off manga. Other modes include Score Attack and Unlimited Mars, in which you fight ridiculously tough enemies, and the excellent survival character building Abyss mode, in which you pit your enhanced character against other similarly enhanced fighters. In short this latest *BlazBlue* is packed with content.

Even with the attempts to make the game accessible to newcomers, we can see how players might be intimidated by *BlazBlue*. However, with so much high-quality content, hardcore fighting fans will likely love it.

RetroGamer_Mag scored **9** for
BlazBlue: ChronoPhantasma Extend
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



[PS4] The character roster is extremely well-balanced, allowing a great selection of fighting styles.

> **"BlazBlue is now the biggest name left in 2D fighting"**



» [PS4] There's never a dull moment in *BlazBlue* – the game is a constant explosion of colour and noise.



» [PS4] There are some insane specials to pull off with many being rather outlandish.



### The Legend Of Zelda: Tri Force Heroes

» **System:** 3DS

» **Buy it for:** £34.99 » **Buy it from:** Online, retail, eShop

If you're looking for another classic *Zelda* adventure prepare for disappointment. *Tri Force Heroes* is predominantly a multiplayer game; so much so in fact that the single player component is woefully average. Things perk up a bit when you team-up with two other characters to solve puzzles (typically by standing on each other's shoulders), but even this feels undercooked. Communicating online is a pain, too, due to Nintendo's insistence on using illustrated panels, which is cute but outdated. *Tri Force Heroes* does have neat touches but it feels like a huge step back after the brilliance of *Four Swords Adventures*.

RetroGamer_Mag scored **6** for
The Legend Of Zelda: Tri Force Heroes
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



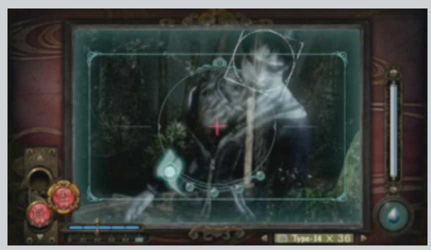
### Divinity: Original Sin – Enhanced Edition

» **System:** Xbox One (tested) PS4

» **Buy it for:** £59.99 » **Buy it from:** Retail and online

Originally released on PC in 2014, this delightful homage to the classic western RPGs of the Nineties is now on PS4 and Xbox One. Playing like a cross between the *Diablo* and *Baldur's Gate* series, *Original Sin* is a wonderfully versatile RPG that constantly throws new mechanics at you. The story is top-notch, there's a solid range of interesting character types and NPCs, while the combat system is satisfying and fulfilling. While it inevitably suffers in the control department, a multiplayer mode and the wealth of additional content will keep RPG fans busy for hours. A classic old school adventure in a shiny HD skin.

RetroGamer_Mag scored **8** for
Divinity Original Sin: Enhanced Edition
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



### Project Zero: Maiden Of Black Water

» **System:** Wii U » **Buy it for:** £39.99

» **Buy it from:** Online, live, Wii U eShop

Well this is novel, a horror game that isn't scary. There are plenty of good ideas in this latest *Project Zero*, including the innovative use of the Wii U's gamepad to move your camera and a neat water gauge mechanic, but as a horror game it falls flat. The ghost encounters are many, but they're rarely creepy, and the only terror comes from not angling your gamepad correctly to do the most damage. There are plenty of locations to explore and three characters to control, but it also overuses areas, which makes everything feel overly familiar. *Maiden Of Black Water* is a solid game, but it's far weaker than its pant-wettingly scary predecessors.

RetroGamer_Mag scored **6** for
Project Zero: Maiden Of Black Water
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

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# Welcome to Homebrew



**J.K**

>> I mentioned in 'Make This' that it's quite easy to disable the upper and lower borders on the C64 but didn't have space to explain how; it works by enabling the vertical smooth scroll masks around raster line $F9 and disabling them at $FC. The timing is loose and it might require a bit of tweaking depending on how you're waiting for those two raster lines



» [MSX] Previous MSxdev entry *Retaliot.*

## PLAY THAT FUNKY MSX

**The name itself pretty much sums up what the MSXdev competition is all about:** developing new games for the MSX computers, and we were very pleased to hear recently that the 2015 iteration of this popular homebrew event has officially been launched. The rules state that all entries should run on a standard MSX with 16K and must fit into 48K of ROM or less so that the games can potentially be pushed onto real cartridges at a later date – extra hardware can be supported but not as a requirement and those features won't be considered by the judges when voting.

Previous years have seen some very solid software released for the platform such as the entertaining and great-looking platformer *Malaika: Prehistoric Quest* from the 2006 competition, an amusing, stiff upper lipped 2009 take on *Manic Miner*-style platforming called *British Bob*, the top-down, puzzle-oriented *Griel's Quest For The Sangraal*, which debuted in 2005, or the enjoyable scrolling blaster, *Mecha 8*, which was released in 2012, to name just a few from what is a large, varied, and often noteworthy, back catalogue of games.

And at the time of writing there's even been an entry announced; a developer working under the pseudonym 'Kitmaker' is in the process of creating *Wing Warriors*, a vertically scrolling shoot-'em-up which reminded us a little of *Phelios* when watching the preview video at Kikstart.eu/wing-warriors-video – hopefully this will be finished in time for the March 2016 deadline and we're looking forward to seeing what else the community offers up, too. The competition's progress can be followed at the link behind Kikstart.eu/msxdev-2015 which is hosted by the otherwise Spanish-speaking MSXBlog.es website – and MSX lovers can also chip in towards the competition's prize pool.

> "Previous years have seen some very solid software released for the platform"

## Incoming

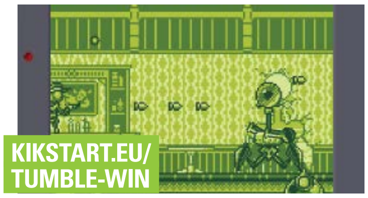
This month we journey to the Wild West and then we delve underwater on the good ship 2600

KIKSTART.EU/DOOM-PATROL-2600



▲ It's still a work in progress, but *Doom Patrol* is a tank action game for the Atari 2600.

▼ *Rough And Tumble* is a browser-based, Wild West-themed run-and-gun game which emulates the Game Boy.



KIKSTART.EU/TUMBLE-WIN

KIKSTART.EU/ALPHA-RACE-7800




▲ The recently released *Alpha Race* for the Atari 7800 is a clone of Midway's venerable coin-op *Omega Race.*

## LOVE IN THE DARK

Atari Age user 'mariuszw' has been working on conversions for the Atari 8-bit recently and his latest is *Total Eclipse*, a spot of 3D archaeology based on code from the C64 version of the game but with several optimisations to improve the speed. This really is for the best, the *Freescape* engine on the C64 is slow so even the Atari's faster processor wouldn't have made much difference on its own. Have a look at the thread at Kikstart.eu/eclipse-a8 to download a playable version of the game and see some of the presentation graphics being created.



» [Atari 8-bit] Nothing I can say.

» [Commodore 64] It's a bit old but it's mine.




## IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO LIVE

And staying with porting, programmer Norbert Kehrer has taken the Atari 8-bit conversion he recently released of Atari coin-op *Sprint 1* that we looked at last issue and modified it to run on the C64 as well. There are some tweaks and the cars look a little tidier when rotating, but under the hood it's the same racing action as before. Kikstart.eu/sprint-1-c64 pops over to the relevant page of his website and it's worth looking around at the other programs like the amazing *Asteroids* Emulator or his conversion of PET shoot-'em-up *Galaga* to the Atari 8-bit as well.

▼ *Gizzle Wap 2* for the Atari 2600 has a nautical theme and is coming together on the Atari Age forums.



**KIKSTART.EU/ GIZZLE-2-2600**

# Homebrew heroes

**Atari 7800 programmer Steve Engelhardt recently released Boom! and it's source code to help fellow developers learn their way around 7800basic – you can find it over at Kikstart.eu/7800basic – so we got in touch for a chat about how easy BASIC programming can be for Atari's ProSystem**

» [Atari 7800] An Earth-shattering Kaboom!




» [Atari 7800] Bombs away!






» Steve Engelhardt

**So to begin with, what led to *Boom!* being developed?**
It was developed in order to support the 7800basic programming community with a quality sample game to build their skills on. I personally learn best from example and I want to help as many others as possible. I've been using Fred Quimby's 2600 batariBasic for many years, and I was excited when I discovered that Mike Saarna had developed 7800basic based on it. The 7800 has much greater capabilities than the 2600 and, from a programmer's perspective, it's fun to take advantage of them. *Boom!* is based on Activision's *Kaboom!*, a game I've always enjoyed.

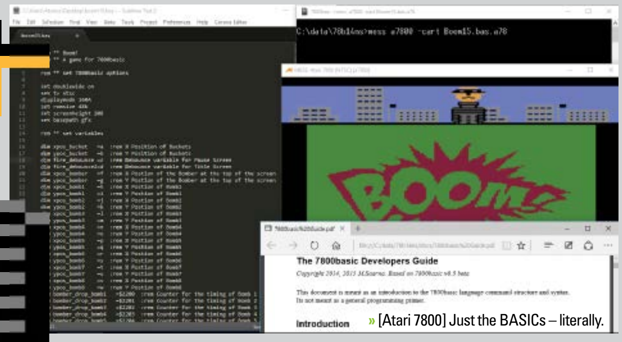
**It was written with 7800basic, how is that to program with?**
Anyone who has experience programming in BASIC would find 7800basic very easy to use and learn. Creating graphics is more advanced than the 2600 as it uses bitmapped graphics for sprites and the backgrounds, but it's not hard to learn. I use Gimp for graphics editing as it's free. 7800basic is akin to a rapid development tool compared to pure assembly language, but it still takes hundreds of hours to make a polished game in BASIC. I have a great deal of respect for assembly programmers.

**Were there any particular high or low points during the programming?**
As *Boom!* was written as a sample program it is less complex than other Atari homebrew games I've released like *Dungeon Stalker* and *Cave In*, which took many months of development time each. The high point of programming any homebrew is seeing all your ideas come to fruition in a finished product, the low points are always spending many hours debugging code trying to resolve an elusive problem. Fortunately there are many gracious programmers and players in the community that are willing to help with debugging and testing.

**What kind of feedback have you received from gamers?**
The feedback I've received from my games has always been quite positive and very constructive. I try to focus on direct feedback from gamers and incorporate everyone's ideas into my games when it is possible. It always feels like a collaborative effort with the community. Many enhancements were made to my past projects based on feedback and suggestions.

**Finally, do you have any future plans our readers would be interested in?**
Actually, I just finished up a collaborative project with Mike Saarna called *Dungeon Stalker* that was released by AtariAge in October at the Portland, Oregon classic game show. I don't have a new project I'm working on right now but will be starting on a new game later this year. I have a soon to be released utility to assist with creating AtariVox speech, and I'd love to tackle an adventure game next. I released an adventure demo last year that I'll use for the game engine. All of my 2600 and 7800 hacks and homebrews from years past can be downloaded at my website over at bjars.com.






» [Atari 7800] Just the BASICs – literally.

# CAP'N RESCUE: THE ESCAPE

» **FORMAT:** ZX SPECTRUM » **DEVELOPER:** STEPHEN NICHOL
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/CR2-SPEC » **PRICE:** FREE




» [ZX Spectrum] It's alive… it's alive!

Captain Robert Goode is an all-round good guy and a hero to millions, but he's been having a pretty hard time lately. His previous misadventure *Cap'n Rescue* saw him separated from his crew and, after a run-in with the evil witch Mortyna, our hero had his soul rather unceremoniously transplanted into the body of his pet chimp. Assumed to now be harmless in this form and left to his own devices, the simian version of Goode searched the witch's fortress until he found both his body and the potion to restore his essence into it and that's where this second game picks up from. But, although the good captain is now properly restored to his human form, he's still trapped deep within Mortyna's lair so the first order of business is to escape to freedom and hopefully be reunited with his crew at the same time.

*Cap'n Rescue: The Escape* is, like the previous game in the series, a flip screen platformer where the player must search the screens for useful items; there are a few of these to be collected such as the extra life boxes and laser power-ups which can be used to open the electrified doors or temporarily blast some of the harder to avoid nasties but it pays to be careful since, when a life is lost, this power will disappear with it too and there are only a finite number of the items around to collect. The coins can be grabbed as well but these are just for status and don't actually do anything useful.

The collision detection is strict so practice will be required to acclimatise to jumps and, along with the spikes and patrolling nasties to worry about, falling too far will also prove fatal. The captain only has a finite number of lives but there isn't a time limit to hurry him along, so care can be taken when making difficult jumps or avoiding enemies. The map isn't massive, but the game is entertaining to play whilst offering a reasonable challenge for most players.

> RetroGamer_Mag scored **8** for Cap'n Rescue: The Escape
> 8
> Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

> "The collision detection is strict so practice will be required to acclimatise to the jumps"




» [ZX Spectrum] That looks nasty…

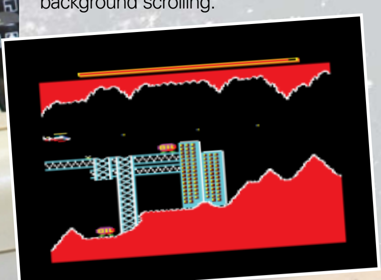



» [ZX Spectrum] My life will never be the same.

# Make this

**Every month our very own Jason Kelk will be teaching you handy new programming techniques. This month: utillising hardware features**

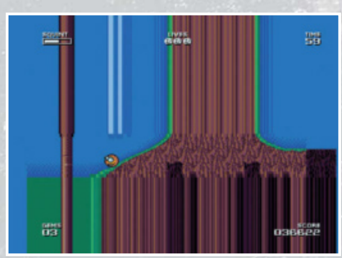
**1** We've mentioned games like *Killer Cobra* on the Amstrad CPC which are, to a degree at least, shaped by the hardware they're running on and specific techniques that take advantage of it; the levels have been designed around the high-speed background scrolling.





**2** And there are unique features for each 8-bit or 16-bit system that, with a little lateral thinking, can be used as a feature; the Spectrum's colour attribute system is used by Bob Smith's *SplATTR* to render a chunky but colourful game arena.

**3** *Zerosphere* on the Amiga relies on the hardware to stretch the playfield outside of the player's visual range. Trying to navigate in this world is challenging – holding fire makes it snap into focus as the character squints – and this makes it stand out.





**4** Finally there are games like *Delta*, *Armalyte* or *Wizball* on the C64 where the upper and lower borders are disabled – a simple process in itself – in order to make space for the in-game status panels, leaving the main screen itself free for the game.

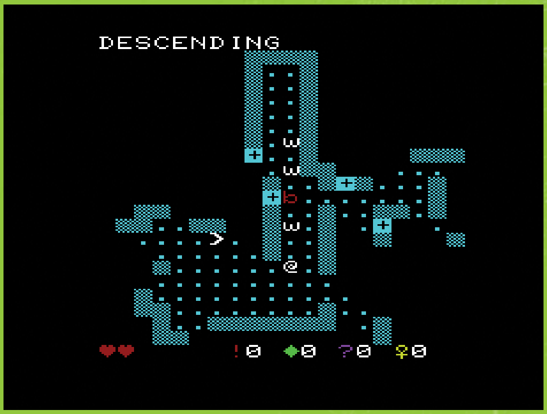
# DEMONS OF DEX

» **FORMAT:** COMMODORE VIC 20 » **DEVELOPER:** PETRI HÄKKINEN
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/DEX-VIC » **PRICE:** FREE

The Arch Druid is nearing the end of his life and, as is the custom, has started searching for his successor. While one candidate called Eino stands out, before he can be promoted there's a task to complete; he must enter the labyrinthine dungeon Dex, survive countless enemies and defeat the three Demon Lords lurking within while grabbing a few gems along the way as a bonus.

This game reminded us of another roguelike called *Serpent Caves* but, although the controls are responsive and the graphics are an improvement, *Demons Of Dex* is also significantly harder, mostly because the enemy AI. It is a deeper game but, even with the enemies taking turns with Eino to move, he'll still get pinned into a corner with little hope of fighting his way out so it can be a frustrating experience.

RetroGamer_Mag scored **7** for
Demons of Dex
7
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



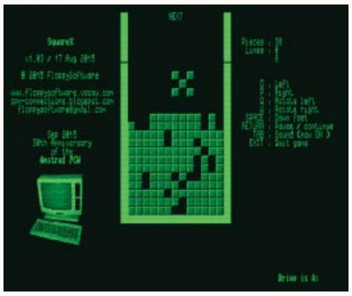
» [Commodore VIC-20] Running away is good.

# SQUAREX

» **FORMAT:** AMSTRAD PCW » **DEVELOPER:** FLOPPY SOFTWARE
» **DOWNLOAD:** FLOPPYSOFTWARE.ES » **PRICE:** FREE

The formula behind *Tetris* isn't complicated: just give the player a decent workspace, start dropping selected pieces in one at a time and continue until they're overwhelmed so there's no space left. But, simple as that may be, it's also a well-tested and reliable design and it's proven risky in the past when developers have tried tweaking it. But *SquareX* tries just that, replacing most of the shapes with new ones.

The result is, due to the addition of more difficult to place pieces, significantly harder to play and that's something of a pity. The execution is solid but the dominant feeling most of the time is panic when one of the nastier objects pops up at the top of the playfield and the longer, hard-fought *Tetris* games where the well gets worryingly full just as the perfect piece appears to save the day don't seem to happen.


» [Amstrad PCW] Where can this thing go?!

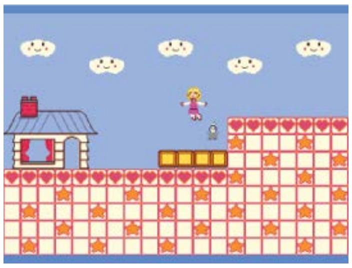
RetroGamer_Mag scored **6** for
SquareX
6
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

# PINGOUIN ROSE

» **FORMAT:** SEGA MEGA DRIVE » **DEVELOPER:** DJCC
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/ROSE-MD » **PRICE:** FREE

Playtime is over and it's time for Rose to tidy up and bring her toys back into the house, most of which are penguins. There's one to collect on each stage and our heroine must make her way across the screen to the toy and back – the toy will, once touched, follow her home – before moving on to the next and players who gather all of the plushies get an extra reward.

This is a very easy game to complete, but that was a very deliberate decision since the programmer wrote it for his young daughter. The stages are therefore easy to pass and none of the hazards are fatal to Rose, so this is really a game meant for younger children to enjoy playing rather than our readers themselves – that said, although it won't be challenging for an adult it's still rather charming to work through.


» [Mega Drive] Why would a penguin need a hat…?

RetroGamer_Mag scored **8** for
Pingouin Rose
8
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

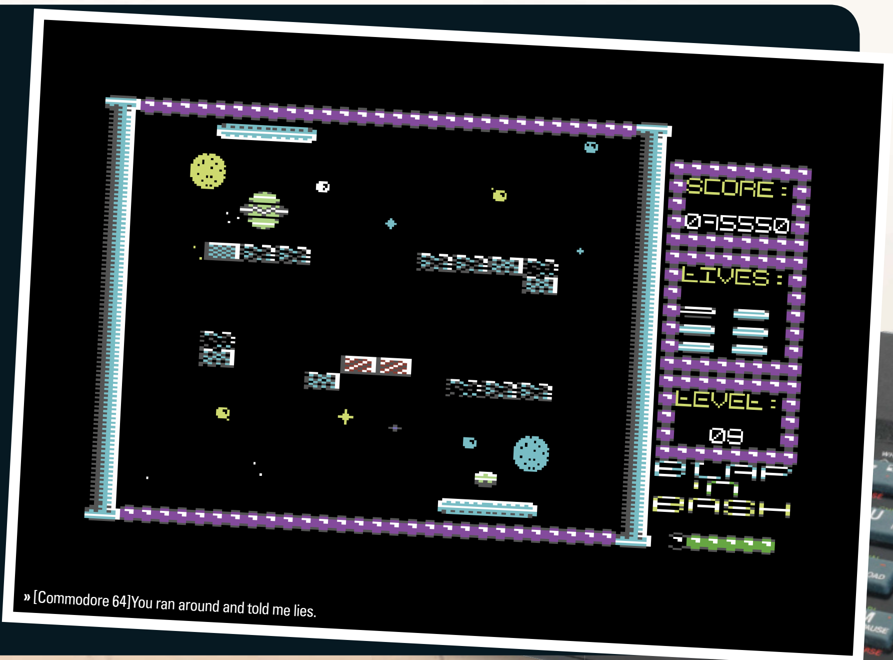
# BLAP 'N BASH

» **FORMAT:** COMMODORE 64 » **DEVELOPER:** THE NEW DIMENSION
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/BLAP-C64 » **PRICE:** FREE

*Blap 'N Bash* is an *Arkanoid*-style game where the challenge is to dispose of bricks by smashing a ball against them. But there's a twist: since the player takes control of two bats, the bottom one follows their joystick control directly while the top reverses the input. The ball has some shielding so hitting the laser fences behind the bats will only destroy it after a number of impacts and the aliens have no negative effects at all.

Bashed bricks will sometimes drop an item that will 'fall' towards one of the bats, these can grant an extra life, alter the ball speed or make it smash through the wall. This is a simple variant on the *Arkanoid* theme with the ball merely reversing y-direction when hitting the bats, but that actually works in this case and it's more fun to play for it.

RetroGamer_Mag scored **8** for
Blap 'N Bash
8
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



» [Commodore 64] You ran around and told me lies.

# MAILBAG

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## STAR LETTER

## MONEY TALKS

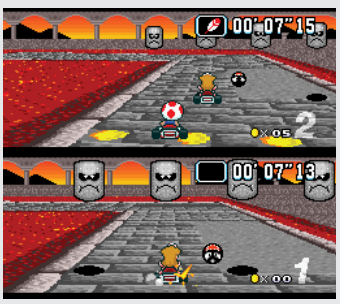



Hi **Retro Gamer**,
When I started collecting games in 2003, I paid AU$40 for a PAL version of *Mega Man X*. Back then, I specifically remember saying "$40 for a second hand game… how can this be?!" More than a few years go by and I *finally* get a PAL version of *A Link To The Past*… now we're up to AU$100. "That's as much as a brand new game!" I said. *Mega Man X* isn't looking too bad now.

In case you haven't noticed my favourite console is the SNES, and it's one of the most expensive consoles to collect for at the moment. How telling is it that the SNES demands such high prices? No matter where you look the SNES is always higher than the rest. Yes, some consoles/computers aren't as old, but some are – Atari, Commodore, Sinclair – and even Sega consoles don't demand prices of Nintendo consoles seem to from the same time period. Yes the boxes are flimsy and the Mega Drive's were rock solid, but even loose SNES cartridges are more expensive than many Sega games in complete condition.

Does the rarity of the games make a difference? Every past and present console has expensive rarities, but even non-rare games like *Chrono Trigger* are getting unrealistically high. It sold over two million copies. Is that rare?

Is the second hand market going to tell us all what the best consoles of all time were… eventually?
Todd McDonnell



» [SNES] Super Mario Kart sold millions of copies, but good luck finding a loose cartridge for less than £10.

**It's an interesting question, but the problem is that it's so hard to make comparisons. Too many factors go into pricing – rarity, condition, fan followings and such. Even modern Nintendo games stick at high prices – we remember seeing *Mario Kart DS* going for its original £30 price back in 2010.**

Otherwise how would you know to write about the Neo-Geo, *Metal Gear Solid*, and the wonder that was the N64 pad all in one issue? You even wrote about *Outtrigger*, one of my Dreamcast favourites than no one else ever seems to have heard of, let alone played. I just picked up issue 147 and I'm looking forward to devouring the articles in there, too, especially the 30 Mario Moments.




The only thing I didn't like was you listing the Drop Shot from *Metal Slug* as a duff weapon! You're clearly not using it right! That (very minor) gripe aside, it's great to be back.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm off to join the forum.
Adam Neather

**Glad to have you back in the fold, Adam. We're pleased to see that you enjoyed your first issue after a long break, too – it's tough to balance every issue to cover a wide range of interests, and every issue is potentially someone's favourite ever. Nick stands by the Drop Shot thing, though – it's only situationally good, and in normal combat is less effective than most other weapons. See you on the forum!**

## ACCORDING TO PLAN

Dear **Retro Gamer**,
I have noticed in recent months how the release date of **Retro Gamer** seems to fluctuate quite a bit. Is this a covert way of adding, say, another issue to our annual schedule of **Retro Gamer** magazines? Not that I would mind, of course!
D O'Connor

**We do shift things around a little to accommodate for holidays and the like, but our production schedule has always been 13 issues per year (or roughly one every four weeks). In fact, it's incredibly consistent – this time in 2005, Retro Gamer readers would have been reading Darran's very first issue as editor. A decade later, you're reading his 131st – quite an impressive achievement.**

## HOME COMFORTS

Hello **Retro Gamer,**
Just as it's true that you don't know what you've got until it's gone, I learned recently that you don't know what you're missing until you get it back. About a month ago I moved back to the UK after four-with-some-change years in New Zealand. There were a few obvious things I was looking forward to: seeing my family again, decent internet speeds, Hob Nobs, that sort of thing. But as I was wandering through my local newsagents, I spotted **Retro Gamer** on the shelf, resplendent with the Neo-Geo AES on the cover. The very same machine that a very young and very optimistic version of myself thought he could afford if he sold all his Game Gear collection.

I bought the issue immediately, and I definitely didn't regret it. Do you have cameras in my house or something?

## DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

### Imagine Championship Wrestling

**After our colleague Josh West from GamesTM was hilariously recreated in *WWE 2K16*'s character creation mode, the whole office has been readied for simulated battle. Darran's love of grappling characters in fighting games has made him a natural fit – all we needed was to give him Hugo's moves from *Street Fighter III*.**



## WHITEYOSHING

Hi **RG,**
When Yoshi's Island (*Super Mario World 2*) first hit SNES everyone hailed it as the best game ever, yet it didn't feature at all in your 30 greatest Mario moments. Surely a massive oversight?
Johnny Moss



» [SNES] We're not ignoring this crayon-coloured classic – Nintendo just doesn't include it in the *Mario* series now.

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**Email:** retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk





**Funnily enough, we didn't forget *Yoshi's Island* and actually debated its inclusion within the feature, but ultimately came to the decision not to include it. The reason for this is that we used Nintendo's list of *Super Mario Bros.* games as a guideline – a list which includes every game we featured, but not *Yoshi's Island, Wario Land* or titles like *Super Mario Bros. Special*. Rest assured, we still have a healthy respect for *Yoshi's Island* – in fact, there's a copy in the office right now.**

## XBOXER

Dear **RG**,

I hated the Xbox so much that I bought one recently and hammered it to pieces with my trusty sledgehammer and then drilled the remaining debris with my fists into the ground and soil beneath.

Owen Browne

**Congratulations! You have successfully rendered one Xbox inoperable. This is a major percentage of the mere 24 million sold worldwide, and a huge step on the way to the complete elimination of your least favourite console.**

## TITLE FIGHT

Dear Sir or Madam,

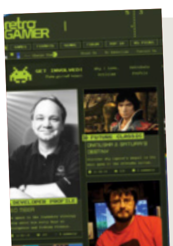
In answer to the letter by Phil Osgood in Issue 147 of **Retro Gamer** magazine regarding game names being so dull nowadays, every now and again a gem will appear. One that immediately springs to mind (which ensures we have to suppress a laugh) is the console title, *Grabbed By The Ghoulies*!

Stuart Hardy

**That's a good shout, although we should point out that it's 12 years old now – it's even in a retro compilation – and if you haven't checked out *Rare Replay, Grabbed By The Ghoulies* is one of the most impressively updated games on it. Rare also gave us the excellently-titled It's *Mr Pants!*, so we have a lot of time for its unusual naming conventions.**



» [Xbox One] If you enjoyed *Grabbed By The Ghoulies*, then an updated verion is available on *Rare Replay*.



# From the forum

» www.retrogamer.net/forum

Every month, **Retro Gamer** asks a question on the forum and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know…

## Gaming's most memorable controversies

**Mayhem**

As for my own thoughts, some that spring to mind are some of the strangest and stupidest. *BMX XXX* – because hey, showing cleavage is worse than shooting someone in the head!

**Belgarath**

I vaguely remember *Last Ninja*, I think it was being taken off the shelves at WH Smith because it came with a plastic shuriken.

**Bub&Bob**

*The Great Giana Sisters* & *Katakis* springs to mind. Not to mention some of the advertising back in the day including *Game Over*, *Psycho Pigs UXB* and *Barbarian*.

**David**

"NINTENDO KILLED MY SON" and other ridiculous tabloid headlines in the Nineties claiming that flashing videogame screens would kill you. Apparently *Sonic 2*'s bonus level was more dangerous than heroin.

**ncf1**

I remember *Carmageddon* causing quite a big stir at the time, even causing debates and such in parliament. Not too far down the track and we have *Grand Theft Auto V*, which is riddled with the absolute extremities of profanity and violence and nobody bats an eyelid anymore.

**joefish**

Clive Sinclair beating Chris Curry with a rolled up newspaper and getting them both thrown out of The Baron of Beef in Cambridge back in 1983 – happy days!

**ArchaicKoala**

That original Xbox advert "Life Is Short" didn't half cause a storm did it? At the time I liked it but looking back I can see why it was banned.

**Mancman**

*Game Over* by Dinamic is the first time I remember a game causing a little controversy. The front cover art had a woman showing half a nipple if I remember correctly. Also a great game by the way!

**The Beans**

*Limbo Of The Lost*, the game that stole… well, almost everything.

**the_hawk**

"Unclear User" – a bit cheeky from the *Crash* guys… but a complete sense of humour bypass on the part of *Sinclair User*.

**Retrobussola**

Another one was *Carmageddon*. Many associations didn't like the fact that you can complete a race running over pedestrians. In many countries, like Germany, the first release of the game was censored. They contained zombies with green blood or robots with black oil instead of people.


retro GAMER

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# TINY TOON ADVENTURES: BUSTER BUSTS LOOSE




» Where do the cartoon characters learn to be funny? Acme Looniversity of course! This school enables the likes of Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck and Foghorn Leghorn to pass on their gifts to the stars of tomorrow – and it's those stars that take the stage in Tiny Toon Adventures. Let's join a victorious Buster Bunny as he reaches the end of his quest through the world of cinema…




01

» We join our protagonist in outer space where he's receiving praise from Babs Bunny, who is rather grateful at having been rescued. We're pretty sure we've seen her distinctive curly haircut (or is that her ears?) somewhere else, you know.




02

» Just how lovely is Buster? We must allow Babs to count the ways, which she proceeds to do at great length. Apparently, this week is monologue week at Acme Looniversity. But just as she goes to reward the hero with a kiss…




03

» Heaven help us all, it's the supposedly-beaten final boss Duck Vader! Except he seems to have taken a turn away from the dark side, as he interrupts Babs and Buster to spare the audience from this lovey-dovey nonsense.




04

» Ah, now we get it. As the space backdrop is carted away by Dizzy Devil and the helmet is removed, it is revealed that the whole thing was just a film and Duck Vader was Plucky Duck all along. He's a selfish egotist, just like Daffy, but he's certainly not evil.




05

» With production wrapped, it's time to roll the credits. The furry critters might only be trainees, but they've done a pretty good job on *The Force Awakens*. It's certainly better than *Attack Of The Clones*, and might even reach the heights of the cult classic *Turkish Star Wars*.

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